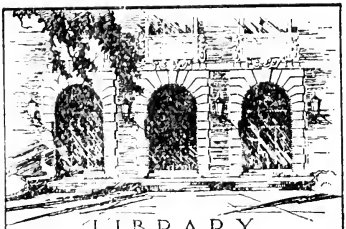

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THE ROBBER:

A TALE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

"RICHELIEU," "THE GIPSY," "ATTILA," &c.

"More should I question thee, and more I must —
Though more to know would not be more to trust —
From whence thou cam'st, how tended on. But rest
Unquestioned, welcome; and undoubted, blest."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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1838.

LONDON:
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New-Street-Square.

TO

WILLIAM JAMES ATKINSON, ESQ.

AND TO

THE MEMORY OF MANY PLEASANT HOURS

SPENT IN HIS SOCIETY,

WHERE

LEARNING, CHEERFULNESS, AND BENEVOLENCE

LEFT NOTHING TO BE REGRETTED

BUT THE FLIGHT OF TIME,

THIS BOOK

IS DEDICATED BY HIS FRIEND,

THE AUTHOR.

1838
V.1

THE ROBBER.

CHAPTER I.

It was in the olden time of *merry England*—Not at that far removed period when our native land first received its jocund name from the bowmen of Sherwood, and when the yeoman or the franklin, who had wandered after some knightly banner to the plains of the Holy Land, looked back upon the little island of his birth with forgetfulness of all but its cheerful hearths and happy days. Oh no! it was in a far later age when, notwithstanding wars and civil contentions not long past by, our country still deserved the name of merry England, and received it constantly amongst a class peculiarly its own. That class was the "good old country gentleman," an antediluvian animal swallowed up and exterminated by the deluge

Hill D. to 650

of modern improvements, and whose very bones are now being ground to dust by rail-roads and steam-carriages. Nevertheless, in that being there was much to wonder at and much to admire; and the inimitable song which commemorates its existence, does not more than justice to the extinct race. It was in the days of Walton and Cotton, then or somewhere thereabouts (for it is unnecessary in a tale purely domestic to fix the date to a year), that the events which we are about to narrate took place, and the scene is entirely in *merry England.*

The court and the country were at that period —with the present we have nothing to do— two completely distinct and separate climates; and while the wits and the libertines, the fops and the soldiers, the poets and the philosophers, of the reigns of Charles, James, William, and Anne, formed a world in which debauchery, vice, strife, evil passion, rage, jealousy, and hatred, seemed the only occupations of genius, and the true sphere for talent; while Oxford and Cambridge had their contentions, and vied with the

capital in nourishing feuds and follies of their own; there was a calm and quiet world apart, amidst the shady brooks and sunny fields and dancing streams of merry England; a world which knew but little of the existence of the other, except when the vices, or follies, or crimes of the world of the court called upon the world of the country to resist the encroachments of its neighbour, and defend its own quiet prosperity.

From the peasant who tilled the glebe, and whistled to outsing the lark over his happy toil, up to the lord of the manor, the knight whose many ancestors had all been knights before him, the countrymen of England mingled hardly, if at all with the world of the metropolis and of the court; except indeed when some aspiring spirit, filled with good viands and a fair conceit, raised his wishes to be knight of the shire, and sit in parliament amongst the more courtly of the land; or else when some borough sent its representative to the senate to bring down strange tales of London life and fresh fashions for the wives and daughters.

There was indeed a connecting link between the two states of being we have described, afforded by the old hereditary nobility of the land; many members of which still lingered by the ancestral hall, as yet unallured from the calm delights of rural life and the dignified satisfaction of *dwelling amongst their own people*, even by all the amusements or luxuries of the capital. An annual visit to London, an appearance in the court of the sovereign and the house of peers at certain times, varied the existence of this class of men; and neither liking, comprehending, nor esteeming the wits and foplings of the metropolis, they returned well pleased to hold their ancient state in the country, bearing renewed importance amongst the county gentlemen around, from this fresh visit to the fountain of all honours and distinctions.

Great indeed was their importance amongst their neighbours at all times — far greater than we in the present day can well picture to ourselves; for independent of the consequence acquired by spending large incomes within a limited sphere, the feeling of feudal influence

was not extinct, though the fact had become a nonentity; and the tenantry on a great man's estate looked up to him in those days, with the greater veneration and devotion, because they were not compelled to do so. Above the tenantry again, the squire and the magistrate, who not only owed a great part of their comfort in the county, their consideration with their neighbours, and their estimation in their own eyes, to the degree of favour in which they stood with the earl, the marquis, or the duke; but who might at any time be rendered uncomfortable and persecuted, if not oppressed, in case they forfeited his good graces, failed not to show their reverence for him on every legitimate occasion—and sometimes perhaps went a little farther also.

Thus of the little hierarchy of the county, there was generally some nobleman as the chief, and from him it descended through baronets, lords of the manor, knights, justices, squires, and many an *et cetera* down to the lowest class of all, who still looked up to that chief, and would tell the passer-by, with much solemn truth,

that "the earl was quite a king in his own part of the world."

Amongst such classes, in such scenes, and at such a period, took place the events about to be described.

At the door of a small neat country inn, stood gazing forth a traveller, one clear bright morning in the end of the month of May. The hour was early: the matutinal servants of the house were scarcely up; and Molly, with mop and pail, was busily washing out the passage which was soon to be thickly strewn with clean yellow sand. The scene before the traveller's eyes was one on which it is pleasant to dwell; the centre street of a small country town, many miles from a great city. There were a few light clouds in the sky, but they did not interrupt the rays of the great orb of light, who was yet low down in the heaven; and the shadows of the manifold white houses, with their peaked gables turned towards the street, fell more than half across the road, forming a fanciful pattern on the ground; the yellow sunshine and the blue shade lying clear and distinct, except where a

little fountain burst forth half way down the town, and mingled the two together.

It was, as I have said, a cool and pleasant scene for the eye to rest upon; and even the casements of the houses opposite, shaded by the close-drawn white curtain, gave an idea of calm and happy repose. The world within were all yet asleep: the toil, the anxiety, the care, the strife of active life, had not yet began.

The eye of the traveller rested upon the picture apparently well pleased. It gazed contemplative up the street to where the road had been made to take a turn, in order to avoid the brow of the gentle hill on which the town was built; and which, crowned with houses of pleasant irregularity, interrupted the farther view in that direction; and then that eye turned downward to the place where the highway opened out into the country beyond, after passing over a small bright stream by a brick bridge of ancient date. Over the bridge was slowly wending at the same moment a long line of cattle, lowing as they went forth to pasture, with a herd following in tuneful mood, and

neither hurrying himself nor them. The stranger's eye rested on them for a single moment, but then roved on to the landscape which was spread out beyond the bridge, and on it he gazed as curiously as if he had been a painter.

On it, too, we must pause, for it has matter for our consideration. The centre of the picture presented a far view over a bright and smiling country, with large masses of woodland, sloping up in blue lines to some tall brown hills at the distance of ten or twelve miles. A gleaming peep of the river was caught in the foreground, with a sandy bank crowned with old trees; and above the trees again appeared the high slated roofs of a mansion, whose strong walls, formed of large flints cemented together, might also here and there be seen looking forth, grey and heavy, through the green, light foliage. Three or four casements, too, were apparent, but not enough of the house was visible to afford any sure indication of its extent, though the massiveness of the walls, the width of the spaces between the windows, the size of the roofs, and

the multitude of the chimneys, instantly made one mentally call it *The Manor House.*

This mansion seemed to be at the distance of about a mile from the town; but upon a rising ground on the opposite side of the picture, seen above bridge and trees, and the first slopes of the offscape, appeared, at the distance of seven or eight miles, or more, a large irregular mass of building, apparently constructed of grey stone, and in some places covered with ivy—at least, if one might so interpret the dark stains apparent even at that distance upon various parts of its face. There was a deep wood behind it, from which it stood out conspicuously, as the morning sun poured clear upon it; and in front appeared what might either be a deer park filled with stunted hawthorn and low chestnut trees, or a wide common.

Such was the scene on which the traveller gazed, as standing in front of the deep double-seated porch of the little inn, he looked down the road to the country beyond. There was no moving object before his eyes but the herd passing over the bridge; there was no sound

but the lowing of the cattle, the whistling of their driver, and a bright lark singing far up in the blue sky.

It is time, however, to turn to the traveller himself, who may not be unworthy of some slight attention. Certain it is, that the good girl who was now sprinkling the passage and porch behind him with fine sand, thought that he was worthy of such; for though she had seen him before, and knew his person well, yet ever and anon she raised her eyes to gaze over his figure, and vowed, we believe, in her heart, that he was as good-looking a youth as ever she had set eyes on.

His age might be five or six and twenty, and his height, perhaps, five feet eleven inches. He was both broad and deep-chested, that combination which insures the greatest portion of strength, with length and ease of breath; and though his arms were not such as would have called attention from their robustness, yet they were evidently muscular and finely proportioned. Thin in the flanks, and with the characteristic English hollow of the back, his lower limbs were

remarkably powerful, ending, however, in a small well-shaped foot and ankle, set off to good advantage in the neat close-fitting shoe.

His countenance was as handsome as his figure, and remarkably prepossessing; the features, slightly aquiline; the colouring, a rich brown, though the eyes were found to be decidedly blue, when fully seen through the black lashes. His hair waving round his face, and curling upon his neck, was of a deep glossy brown, and the fine shaped lips, which, in their natural position were slightly open, showed beneath a row of even teeth as white as snow. The brow was broad, straight, and high, with the eyebrow, that most expressive of all the features, forming a wavy line of beauty, strongly marked upon the clear skin, and growing somewhat thicker and deeper above the inner canthus of the eye. Between the eyebrows, however, appeared the only thing that the most fastidious critic of beauty could have objected to. It was a deep scar, evidently the mark of a severe cut, whether received by accident in the jocund days of boyhood, or in the manly sports of the country, or in the field of

battle, might be doubtful: but there it rested for ever, a clear, long scar, beginning half-way up the forehead, and growing deeper as it descended, till it formed a sort of indentation between the eyebrows, similar to that produced in some countenances by a heavy frown. Thus to look at the brow, one would have said the face was stern; to look at the eyes, one might have pronounced it thoughtful; but the bland, good-humoured, cheerful smile upon the lips contradicted both, and spoke of a heart which fain would have been at ease, whose own qualities were all bright, and warm and gay, if the cares and strifes of the world would but let them have way.

We shall not pause long upon the stranger's dress. It was principally composed of what was then called brown kersey, a coarse sort of stuff used by the common people; but the buttons were of polished jet, the linen remarkably fine, the hat, with its single straight feather, set on with an air of smartness; while the fishing-basket under the arm, and the rod in the hand, and all the rest of an angler's paraphernalia conspicuous

upon the person, reconciled the homely dress with the distinguished appearance. He was evidently boon for the banks of the clear stream; and yet, though it was the hour of all others, which a fisherman should have cultivated, he lingered for some minutes at the door of the little inn; gazing, as we have depicted him, alternately up and down the street, with a slow, meditative look, as if enjoying the beauty of the morning, and the fair scene around him. It is true, that his eyes turned most frequently, and rested longest, upon the bridge and stream and old manor-house, with the wide country beyond; but still, he occasionally looked to the other bend of the road, and once seemed to listen for some sound.

He had at length taken one step forward, as if to pursue his way, when the voice of the host of the Talbot, good Gregory Myrtle, was heard coming down the stairs, talking all the way for the benefit of any one who might hear, with a fat, jovial ale-burdened sound, which, at other times and seasons, rejoiced the hearts of many a "gay companion of the bowl." The first in-

dication of his coming was a peal of laughter, a loud "Haw, haw, haw!" at some conjugal joke uttered by his dame as he left his chamber.

"Well said, wife! well said!" he exclaimed, "it *is* good to be fat, for when I can no longer walk, I shall easily be rolled — Haw, haw, haw! Gads my life! I must have these stairs propped, or else choose me a chamber on the ground-floor. Sand the floor well, Molly, sand the floor well! Think were I to slip, what a squelch would be there. Ha, Master Harry! ha!" he continued, seeing the stranger turn towards him; "how was it I saw you not last night, when you arrived? You flinched the flagon, I fear me, Master Harry! Nay, good faith, that was not right to old Gregory Myrtle."

"I was tired, good Gregory!" replied the stranger: "I had ridden more than fifty miles to be here to-day, and I wished to rise early, for the sake of my speckled friends in the stream."

"Ale keeps no man from rising," cried the host. "See how it has made me rise, like a pat of dough in a baker's oven! haw, haw, haw!" and he patted his own fat round paunch.

"But whence come ye, Master Harry? from the court, or the city, or the wars?"

"From neither, Myrtle," replied the stranger; "I come from a far distance, to take my tithe of the stream as usual. But how goes on the country since I left it?"

"Well! Mighty well!" answered the landlord, "all just as it was, I think — No! poor old Milson, the sexton, is dead: he had buried four generations of us, and the fifth has buried him. He caught cold at the justice room, giving evidence about that robbery, you remember, out upon the moor; and took to his bed and died."

"Which robbery do you mean?" demanded the other; "there were many going on about that time upon the moor and over the hill. Have there been any lately?"

"Not one since you left the country, Master Harry," replied the landlord.

"I hope you do not mean to hint that I had any hand in them," rejoined his companion with a smile.

"God forbid!" exclaimed good Gregory

Myrtle, "Haw, haw, haw! That was a funny slip of mine! No, no, Master Harry, we know you too well; you are more likely to give away all your own than take a bit of other people's, God bless you."

"I think indeed I am," answered the young man with a sigh; "but if I talk with you much longer, I shall be too late to rob the stream of its trout. Don't forget, Myrtle, to send up to the manor for leave for me, as usual. I suppose his worship is awake by this time, or will be by the time my tackle is all ready:" and so saying, he sauntered on down the street, took the pathway by the bridge, and turning along the bank of the river, was soon lost to the sight.

CHAPTER II.

Sometimes in bright sunny expanse over a broad shallow bed of glittering stones and sand; sometimes in deep pools under high banks bending with shrubs and trees; sometimes winding through a green meadow; sometimes quick and fretful; sometimes slow and sullen; on flowed the little river on its course, like a moody and capricious man amidst all the various accidents of life.

Beginning his preparations close to the bridge, upon a low grassy bank which ran out from the buttress, and afforded a passage round beneath the arches, the stranger, whom the landlord had called Master Harry, had not yet completed all the arrangement of his fishing tackle, when one of those servants — who, in that day, were as famous for a good-humoured idleness in the great hall, as their successors are for an insolent idleness in the present times, and were known by the familiar name of *blue-bottles*—made

his appearance, carrying his goodly personage with a quick step towards the fisherman. The infinite truth generally to be found in old sayings was never more happily displayed than in the proverb, "Like master, like man!" and if so, a pleasant augury of the master's disposition was to be derived from the demeanour of his messenger. As he came near he raised his hand, touched his cap respectfully, though the fisherman was dressed in kersey; and, with a grave complacent smile, wished him good morning.

"Sir Walter gives you good day, sir," he said, "and has told me to let you know that you are quite welcome to fish the stream from Abbot's Mill to Harland, which, God help us, is the whole length of the manor. He says, he has heard of your being here these two years, and always asking leave and behaving consistent; and he is but too happy to give such a gentleman a day or two's pleasure. Let me help you with the rod, sir — it is somewhat stiffish."

The stranger expressed his thanks, both to

Sir Walter Herbert for his permission, and to the servant for his assistance; and the *blue-bottle*, who had also a well-exercised taste for angling, stood and looked on and aided till all was ready. By this time the day had somewhat advanced, and the steps passing to and fro over the bridge and along the road had become more frequent; but they did not disturb the fisherman in his avocations: and as he prepared to ascend the stream, whipping it as he went with the light fly, the old servant turned to depart with one more "good morning, sir;" adding, however, as he looked at a birding-piece which the stranger carried across his shoulder, and then glanced his eye to some red coots which were floating about upon the stream, as familiarly as if they had been small farmers of the water and held it under lease, "Perhaps, sir, you will be kind enough not to shoot the coots and divers — Sir Walter likes to see them on the river."

"I would as soon think of shooting myself, my good friend," replied the other: "I have heard that poor Lady Herbert was fond of

them; and I would not repay Sir Walter's permission so ill."

The servant bowed and withdrew; and, as he passed on, took off his hat reverentially to an old gentleman and a young lady, who were leaning over a low parapet-wall flanking a terrace in the gardens just opposite the bridge. The last words of the servant and the angler had been overheard, and the result we may soon have occasion to show.

We will not write a chapter upon angling. It matters little to the reader whether the stranger caught few or many fish, or whether the fish were large or small. Suffice it to say, that he was an expert angler; that the river was one of the best trout streams in England; that the day was favourable; and if the stranger did not fill his basket with the speckled tenants of the stream, it proceeded from an evil habit of occasionally forgetting what he was about, and spending many minutes gazing alternately at the lordly mansion to be seen in the distance, and the old manor-house beyond the bridge. He came at length, however, to a spot where

both were shut out by the deep banks overhead, and there he soon made up for lost time, though he still threw his line, in thoughtful mood, and seemed all too careless whether the fish were caught or not.

It was their will, however, to be caught; but at the end of four or five hours' fishing, he was interrupted again by the appearance of the same old servant, who now approached, bearing on his arm a basket evidently well laden.

"Sir Walter desired me to compliment you, sir," he said, "and to wish you good sport. He prays you, too, to honour him by supping with him, for he will not interrupt your fishing by asking you to dine. He has sent you, however, wherewithal to keep off hunger and thirst, and trusts you will find the viands good. Shall I spread them out for you?"

There is no sport in the world better calculated to promote the purposes of that pleasant enemy hunger, than throwing the long light line over the clear brook; and the angler, who, in the busy thoughts of other things, had left chance to provide him with a dinner, willingly availed

himself of the good knight's hospitable supply, and did ample justice to all that the basket contained. But there was something more in his feelings on this occasion than the mere gratification of an appetite, though the satisfaction of our hunger has proved a magnificent theme in the hands of our greatest epic poets.

There were other feelings; and there must always be other feelings mingling with our animal impulses, in order to dignify and elevate the needs that unite us with the brute creation: there must be something which links the earthly portion to the unearthly, something that leads the thoughts from the mere act of the clay to things less coarse, to brighter and purer affections. In ancient days they wreathed the wine-cup with flowers, and strewed the festal board with blossoms. Sweet sounds and grateful odours have in all times accompanied the banquet; but few of those who drank and feasted have known why: few have understood that the immortal mind craved occupation of a higher kind, while the body supplied its necessities. The brightest and the tenderest friend

of our earthly being, is that imagination which lends its splendid colouring to all we do, and which, like the beneficent hand of nature itself, clothes dust and ashes, and clouds and vapours, in beauty and brightness not their own.

There were other feelings in the breast of the angler, as he sat down and partook of the viands provided for him, which rendered those viands grateful to the mind as well as to the body; and though the beauty of the scene around, the freshness and splendour of the bright spring day, the wooing of the soft air by the bank of the river, the music of the waters as they glided by him, and the carols of manifold birds in the neighbouring woods, were all accessories which might well render a meal tasted in the midst of them not only pleasant at the time, but memorable in after days: yet there was something more than all this which made the little basket of provisions thrice agreeable to him—something that made him believe he had been understood, as it were intuitively, by the only persons he would have stooped to seek in the neighbourhood, if he could have

stooped to seek any one—something, perhaps, beyond that, which may or may not be rendered clear hereafter, as the reader's eye is obscure or penetrating into the secrets of the human heart and character. He received, then, the gift with gladness, and sat down to partake of it with something more than hunger. He accepted willingly, also, the invitation he had received to sup at the manor-house; and bestowing a piece of money on the serving man which amply repaid the pains he had taken, he suffered him to depart, though not till he had lured him down the stream to see several trout brought out of the bright waters with as skilful a hand as ever held a rod.

The fisherman was still going on after the old servant had left him, when he was suddenly roused by a rustling in the high-wooded bank above; and the moment after he saw descending by a path, apparently not frequently used, a personage upon whose appearance we must dwell for a moment.

The gentleman on whose person the fisherman's eyes were immediately fixed was some-

where within the ill-defined limits of that vague period of human life called the middle age. None of his strength was gone, perhaps none of his activity; but yet the traces of time's wearing hand might be seen in the grey that was plentifully mingled with his black hair, and in the furrows which lay along his broad, strongly marked brow. He was well dressed, according to the fashion of that day; and any one who has looked into the pictures of Sir Peter Lely must have seen many such a dress as he then wore without our taking the trouble of describing it.

That was a period of heavy swords and many weapons; but the gentleman who now approached bore nothing offensive upon his person but a light blade, which looked better calculated for show than use, and a small valuable cane hanging at his wrist. There was a certain degree of foppery, indeed, about his whole appearance, which accorded not very well with either his form or his features. He was about the same height as the angler whom we have before described, but much more

broadly made, with a chest like a mountain bull, and long sinewy arms and legs, whose swelling muscles might be discerned, clear and defined, through the white stocking that appeared above his riding boots. His face was quite in harmony with his person, square cut, with good, but somewhat stern, features, large bright eyes flashing out from beneath a pair of heavy overhanging eyebrows, a well shaped mouth, though somewhat too wide, and a straight nose, rather short, but not remarkably so.

The complexion was of a deep tanned brown; and there were many lines and furrows over the face, which indicated that the countenance there presented was a tablet on which passion often wrote with a fierce and fiery hand, leaving deep, uneffaceable traces behind. That countenance, indeed, was one calculated to bear strong expressions; and which, though changing rapidly under the influence of varied feelings, still became worn and channelled by each — by the storm and the tempest, the sunshine and the shower.

On the present occasion, the expression of

his face was gay, smiling, and good humoured; and as he approached the angler he exclaimed, with a laugh, "You have dined well, Master Harry; and, methinks, had you been generous, you might have saved me a nook of the pie, or a draught out of the bottle."

"I did not know you were so near, Franklin," answered the angler, somewhat gravely: "I thought you would have met me at the Talbot this morning; and not finding you, I fancied that you had forgotten your promise."

"I never forget a promise," replied the other sharply, and with his brow beginning to lower — "I never forget a promise, Master Harry, be it for good or evil. Had I promised to blow your brains out, I would have done it; and having promised to meet you here this morning, here I am."

"Do not talk such nonsense to me, Franklin, about blowing men's brains out," replied the angler calmly; "such things do not do with me! I know you better, my good friend! But what prevented you from coming?"

"You do not know me better!" replied the

other sharply. "If I ever said I would blow your brains out — the which God forbid — by the rood I would do it; and as to what has kept me, I have been here since yesterday morning seeing what is to be done. I tell you, Master Harry, that the time is come; and that if we lay our plans well, we may strike our great stroke within the next three days. I had my reasons, too, for not coming up to the Talbot; but you go back there, and hang about the country, as if you had no thought but of fishing or fowling. Have your horses ready, fresh and well fed for action at a moment's notice, and I will find means to give you timely warning. You know my boy Jocelyn! When you see him about, be sure that there is something to be done; find means to give him a private hearing instantly, and have your arms and horses, as I have said, all prepared."

While the other was speaking, the angler had laid down his rod on the bank, and crossing his arms upon his chest, had fixed his fine thoughtful eyes full calmly and steadfastly upon his companion. "Franklin," he said at

length, "I trust you to a certain point in the conduct of this business, but no farther! I trust you because I believe you to be faithful, bold, active, and shrewd. But remember there is a point where we must stop. What is it you propose to do? I am not one to be led blindfold even by you, Gray; and I remember but too well, that when in other lands fortune cast our lots together, you were always bent upon some wild and violent enterprise, where the risk of your own life seemed to compensate in your eyes for the wrong you at times did to others. Forgive me, Gray; but I must speak plainly. You have promised—you have offered to do me a great service — the greatest, perhaps, that man could render me; but you have not told me how it is to be done; and there must be no violence."

"Not unless we are obliged to use it in our own defence," replied the other sharply. "As to the rest, Master Harry, the enterprise is mine as well as yours: so do not make me angry, or you may chance to fail altogether, and find Franklin Gray as bad an enemy as he can be a good friend."

"No threats, Franklin," replied the other: "you should know that threats avail not with me. I thank you deeply for all your kindness, Franklin, but neither gratitude nor menaces can lead me blindfold. Years have passed since in the same high and noble cause, and under the same great good man, we fought together on the banks of the Rhine; and you seem to have forgotten that even then, boy as I was, neither threats nor persuasions would move me to do any thing I judged — though, perhaps, falsely — to be really wrong. A change has come over you, Gray; but no change has come over me. I am the same, and will remain the same."

"Did you not promise to leave the conduct of this to me?" cried his companion. "Did you not promise to submit to my guidance therein? But never mind! I give you back your promise. Break it all off! Let us part. Go, and be a beggar. Lose all your hopes, and leave me to follow my own course. I care not! But I will not peril my neck for any dastard scruples of yours."

"Dastard!" exclaimed the other, taking a step towards him, and half drawing his sword

out of the sheath with the first impulse of indignation, while his brow contracted, so as to cover entirely the deep scar between his eyes. "Dastard! such a word to me!"

"Ay, to you, or any one," replied Franklin Gray, laying his hand upon the hilt of his sword also, as if about to draw it instantly, while his dark eye flashed and his lip quivered under the effects of strong passion.

The next impulse, however, was to gaze for a moment in the countenance of his young opponent; the expression of anger passed away; and withdrawing his hand from the hilt, he threw his arms round the other, exclaiming, "No, no, Harry! We must not quarrel! We must not part! at least not till I have fulfilled all I promised. I have nursed you as a baby on my knee; I have stood beside you when the bullets were flying round our heads like hail; I have lain with you in the same prison; and for your own sake, as well as for those that are gone, I will serve you to the last; but you must not forget your promise either. Leave the conduct of this matter to me, and, on my soul, I will use no violence, I will shed

no blood, except in our own defence! Even then they shall drive me to the last before I pull a trigger."

"Well, well," replied the other, "I will trust you, Franklin, though I have had many a doubt and hesitation lately."

"Did you not promise your mother on her death-bed," demanded the other, straining both his companion's hands in his—"Did you not solemnly swear to her to follow my suggestions, to put yourself under my guidance till the enterprise was achieved?"

"I did, I did!" replied the angler. "I did; but then you promised, freely and frankly, to accomplish the object that was at that moment dearest to her heart; and I had no doubt, I had no fear, as to the means. I certainly did so promise my poor mother; but when she exacted that promise, you and I were both differently situated; and I fear me, Franklin, I fear me, that you are overfond of strife, that you are following paths full of danger to yourself; and that you will not be contented till you have brought evil on your own head."

"Pshaw," replied his companion, turning

away. "That is my affair; I will leave the more maudlin part of the business to you: let me have the strife, if there should be any; but remember your promise, Harry; and let this be the last time that we have such fruitless words."

The other made no reply; and Franklin, after gazing on him moodily for a moment, cast himself down upon the bank, and asked, "How do you bestow yourself to-night?"

"I am invited to sup at the manor-house, with Sir Walter Herbert," replied the angler; "and I shall go."

"Go, to be sure!" exclaimed his companion; "it may serve us more than any thing. Have you ever seen Sir Walter?"

"At a distance," replied the other; "but I never spoke to him. I know him well, however, by repute. They tell me he has fallen into some difficulties."

"From which, perhaps, you may help him," said Franklin, thoughtfully.

"Perhaps I may," answered the angler in the same tone; "perhaps I may, if I can discover

how it may best be done; but at present I only know that difficulties exist, without knowing why or how; for the estates are princely. However, if within my reach, I will try to aid him, whether Fortune ever turns round and smiles upon me or not; for I hear he is as noble a gentleman as ever lived."

"Ay, and has a fair daughter," answered his companion with a smile. "You have seen her, I suppose?"

"Never," replied the angler: "I saw her mother once, who was still very lovely, though she was ill then, and died ere the month was out."

"Go! go!" cried his companion, after a moment's thought; "go to-night, by all means; I feel as if good would come of it."

"I do not know how that can be," said the other, musing, "but still I will go — though you know that, in my situation, I think not of men's fair daughters."

"Why not?" asked Franklin Gray quickly, "why not? What is the situation in which woman and woman's love may not be the jewel

of our fate? What is the state or condition that she may not beautify, or soften, or inspirit? Oh! Harry, if you did but know all, you would see that my situation is, of all others, the one in which woman can have the least share; and yet, what were I — what would I become, were it not for the one — the single star that shines for me on earth? When the fierce excitement of some rash enterprise is over, when the brow aches, and the heart is sick and weary — you know not what it is to rest my head upon her bosom, and hear the pulse within that beats for me alone. You know not what it is, in the hours of temporary idleness, to sit by her side, and see her eyes turn thoughtful from our child to me, and from me to him, and seem busy with the strange mysterious link that unites us three together. Why, I say, should you not think of woman's love, when you, if not riches, have peace to offer — when, if not splendour, you have an honest name? I tell you, Henry Langford, that when she chose me I was an unknown stranger, in a foreign land; that there were strange tales of how and why I

sought those shores; that I had nought to offer but poverty and a bold warm heart. She asked no question — she sought no explanation — she demanded not what was my trade, what were my prospects, whither I would lead her, what should be her after fate. She loved and was beloved — for her that was enough; and she left friends and kindred, and her bright native land, comfort, soft tendance, luxury, and splendour, to be the wife of a houseless wanderer, with a doubtful name. He had but one thing to give her in return — his whole heart; and it is hers."

His companion gazed earnestly in his face, as he spoke, and then suddenly grasped his hand. "Franklin," he said, "you make me sad; your words scarcely leave me a doubt of what I have long suspected."

"Ask me no questions," exclaimed the other, "you have promised to ask no questions."

"Neither do I," rejoined his companion. "What you have said scarcely renders a question needful. Franklin, when several years ago we served with the French army on the

Rhine, and when first you showed that interest in me, which was strange, till my poor mother's sad history explained it in some degree, you promised me solemnly that if ever you should need money you would share my purse, which, however scanty, has still been more than sufficient for my wants."

"But I have never needed it!" interrupted the other—"The time has not come! When it does, I will."

"You trifle with me, Franklin," rejoined his companion; "if you betake you to rash acts and dangerous enterprises, as your words admit ——"

"I may be moved," said Franklin Gray, again interrupting him, "I may be moved by a thousand other causes than the need of money:—the love of activity, the restlessness of my nature, habits of danger and enterprise ——"

"And is not the love of such a being as you have spoken of," demanded his companion, "is it not sufficient to calm down such a nature, to restrain you from all that may hurt or injure her. Think, Franklin, think, if you were to

fail in some of these attempts — if — if — You are moved — think what would be her fate — think what would be her feelings; — nay, listen to me: — share what I have, Franklin. It is enough for us both, if we be but humble in our thoughts and ——"

But the other broke away from him with a sudden start, and something like a tear in his eye. "No, no!" he cried, "no, no!" but then again he turned, ere he had reached the top of the bank, and said, in a low but distinct voice, "Harry, if I succeed in this enterprise for you, and in your favour, you shall have your way."

"But no violence!" replied the angler, "remember, I will have no violence."

"None," rejoined Franklin Gray, "none; for I will take means to overawe resistance; and we will, as we well and justly may, enforce your rights and laugh them to scorn who have so long opposed them; — and all without violence — if possible." But the latter words were uttered in a low tone, and were unheard by his companion.

CHAPTER III.

PERHAPS the sweetest hour of a sweet season is that which precedes the setting of the sun upon a May day. All the world is taking holyday, from the lowing herd that winds slowly o'er the lea, to the shard-born beetle and the large white moth. The aspect of the sky and earth too—clear, calm, and tranquil—are full of repose. The mistiness of the mid-day sunshine is away; and the very absence of a portion of the full daylight, and the thin colourless transparency of the evening air, afford that contemplative, but no way drowsy, charm which well precedes, by thought tending to adoration, the hour when, in darkness and forgetfulness, we trust ourselves unconscious to the hands of God. The heart of man is but as an instrument from which the great musician, Nature, produces grand harmonies; and the most sooth-

ing anthem that rises within the breast is surely elicited by the soft touch of that evening hour.

It had shone calm over the world in those scenes we have lately described, and the last moments of the sun's stay above the horizon were passing away, while, within one of the rooms of the old manor-house of Moorhurst Park, the father and the daughter were sitting tranquilly in the seat of a deep window, gazing over the beautiful view before their eyes, and marking all the wonderful changes of colouring which the gradual descent of the sun and the slow passing of a few light evening clouds, brought each moment over the scene. There is in almost every heart some one deep memory, some one powerful feeling, which has its harmonious connection with a particular hour, and with a particular scene; and, as the father and the daughter gazed, and marked the sun sinking slowly in the far west, one remembrance, one image, one sensation, took possession of both their bosoms. The daughter thought of the mother, the father of the wife, that was lost to them for ever. Neither spoke: both tried to suppress the

feeling, or, rather, to indulge the feeling, while they suppressed its expression. But such efforts are vain, at least with hearts untutored by the cold policies of a superficial world. A tear glistened in the daughter's eye, and she dared not wipe it away, lest it should be remarked. The father's eye, indeed, was tearless, but his brow was sad; and as he withdrew his gaze from the scene before him, and turned his looks upon his daughter, it was with a sigh. He marked, too, the bright drop that still hung trembling on her eyelid, catching the last ray of the setting sun; and, knowing the spring whence that drop arose, he cast his arms around her, and pressed her in silence to his breast.

At that very moment, however — for it is still at the time when the deep shy feelings of the warmest hearts peep forth to enjoy some cool secluded hour, that the world is sure to burst upon them, like the cry of the beagles upon the timid hare — at that very moment, one of the servants opened the door of the chamber, and announced Captain Henry Langford. Sir Walter Herbert withdrew his arms from his daughter,

and took a step forward; and Alice Herbert, though she felt prepossessed in their visitor's favour, felt also almost vexed that he had come so soon to interrupt the sweet but melancholy feelings which were rising in her father's heart and in her own. She gazed with some interest towards the door, however; and the next instant, the angler, whose course through the day we have already traced, entered the apartment. Rod, and line, and fishing-basket had been, by this time, thrown aside, and he stood before them well, but not gaily, dressed; with scrupulous neatness observable in every part of his apparel, and with his wavy brown hair arranged with some care and attention.

His air was distinguished, and not to be mistaken: his person was, as we have before said, eminently handsome; so that, although a stranger to both the father and daughter, he bore with him a letter of recommendation of a very prepossessing kind.

As he entered, Sir Walter Herbert advanced to meet him, with the calm dignity of one who, in former years, had mingled with courts and

camps; and who felt within his breast the ease-giving consciousness of a noble and an upright mind; and he was met by the stranger with the same bearing.

Sir Walter, though not usually familiar, offered him his hand, saying, "Captain Langford, I am very glad to see you; and must explain how it is that I took the liberty of sending you the invitation that has procured me this pleasure. Without intending to act the part of eavesdroppers, my daughter and myself overheard, this morning, the conclusion of a conversation between you and one of my servants, regarding some birds that float about upon the stream; and the few words that fell from you on that occasion breathed a spirit which gave me too strong a temptation to be resisted of seeking your acquaintance, even at the risk of intruding upon the calm and tranquil solitude which you, who are, doubtless, a denizen of cities and courts, seek, in all probability, when you venture into the country."

"It could be no intrusion, Sir," replied his guest; "and let me assure you that, in forbid-

ding me to shoot the wild fowl on the stream, your servant imposed upon me no hard condition. Those birds have been a sort of companions to me, during my sport, for these two or three years past, and I should never have thought of injuring them; but would still less have wished to do so, when I knew that you took a pleasure and an interest in them."

"They are associated with past happiness," said Sir Walter; "and, though I believe it is foolish to cling to things which only awaken regret, yet I confess I do take a pleasure, a sad pleasure perhaps, in seeing them."

"I cannot but think," replied his guest, "that there are some regrets far sweeter than all our every-day enjoyments. The only real pleasures that I myself now possess are in memories; because my only attachments are with the past."

"You are very young to say so, Sir," answered Sir Walter; "you must at an early age have broken many sweet ties."

"But one," replied Langford; "for, through life, I have had but one — that between mother

and a son; but of course it broke with the greater pain from being the only one."

"And your father?"—demanded Sir Walter.

"I never knew him," replied the stranger; and, seeing that the conversation might grow painful, Sir Walter Herbert dropped it; and, turning to his daughter, presented the stranger to her, which he had neglected to do before.

It might be, that, as the old knight did so, the remembrance of what had passed not long before, regarding the beautiful girl to whom he was now introduced, called the colour rather more brightly into Langford's face; and, certainly, it produced a slight degree of embarrassment in his manner, which he had never felt on such an occasion before. She was, certainly, very beautiful, and that beauty of a very peculiar cast. It was the bright and sunshiny, united with the deep and touching. Her skin was clear, and exquisitely fair; her lips full, but beautifully formed; the brow broad and white; and the eyes of that soft peculiar hazel, which, when fringed with long black lashes, perhaps is more expressive than any other colour. The hair, which was very

full and luxuriant, was of a brown — several shades lighter than Langford's own — soft and glossy as silk, and catching a golden gleam in all the prominent lights. She was not tall, but her form was perfectly well proportioned, and every full and rounded limb was replete with grace and symmetry.

Langford's slight embarrassment wore off in a moment; and the conversation turned upon more general themes than those with which it begun. Sir Walter and his daughter, from the few words they had heard in the morning, undoubtedly expected to find in their guest high and kindly feelings, and that grace, too, which such feelings always afford to the demeanour and conversation of those who possess them. But they found much more than they had expected — a rich and cultivated mind, great powers of conversation, much sparkling variety of idea, and an inexhaustible fund of experience, and information regarding many things, whereof they themselves, if not ignorant, had but a slight knowledge; and which he had gained apparently, by travelling far and long in foreign

countries, and by mingling with many classes and descriptions of men. There were few subjects on which he could not speak; and, on whatever he did speak, there was something more displayed than mere ordinary judgment. The heart had its part as well as the understanding, and a bright and playful imagination linked the two together.

Had Sir Walter Herbert and his daughter felt inclined to be distant and reserved towards the stranger, whom they had invited, they could not have maintained such a demeanour long; for he was one of those who applied for admittance to every door of the human heart, and was sure to find some entrance; but when, on the contrary, they were predisposed to like and esteem him, even the first slight chilness of new acquaintance was speedily done away; and, ere he had been an hour in the house, the reciprocation of feeling and ideas, had made them far more intimate with him than with many persons whom they had known for long and uninterrupted years.

Music was talked of, and painting, and sculpture; and in each, Langford, without affecting the

tone of a connoisseur, displayed that knowledge, which is gained rather by a deep feeling for all that is fine and beautiful than from an experimental acquaintance with the arts themselves. He had heard Lulli, and had been present when some of his most celebrated compositions had been first performed; and, though he talked not of the scientific accuracy of this piece of music or of that, he spoke with enthusiasm of the effect which each produced upon the mind; of what feelings they called up; whether they soothed, or inspired, or touched, or saddened, or elevated.

Then, again, when the conversation turned to the sculpture or the painting of Florence or of Rome, he did not—perhaps he could not, use the jargon of connoisseurs: he did not speak of breadth, and juice, and contour, but he told of how he had been affected by the sight, of what were the sensations produced in his bosom, and in the bosoms of others whom he had known, by the Venus, or the Apollo, or the Laocoon, or the works of Raphael, or Guido, or Titian, or Michael Angelo. In short, he dwelt upon that part of the subject which referred to the mind, the imagination, or the heart; and in regard to

which all those who heard him could go along with him, feeling, comprehending, and enjoying all he spoke of or described.

Alice Herbert, though she was not learned in such things, yet had a natural taste, which was not uncultivated. In the seclusion in which she dwelt, the ordinary household duties of a young Englishwoman of that period had not been enough for her; and her mind had been occupied with much and various reading, with music, as it was then known and taught, and with drawing; though in the latter art, she had received no instruction but from her mother, who had acquired it herself while in exile at the court of France. Her father, also, had some taste in, and much feeling for, the arts, and she joined eagerly in the conversation between him and Langford, often leading it, with the sportive eagerness of a young and enthusiastic mind, to a thousand collateral subjects, which constantly elicited, from their new companion, remarks full of freshness and of genius.

She listened, well pleased, — something more than well pleased, struck and surprised: and

rom that night's interview, she bore away matter for deep thought and meditation; — the most favourable effect that man can produce when he wishes to make an impression on the heart of woman.

Did Langford seek to produce such an effect? Perhaps not; or, most likely, he would not have succeeded so well; but he was pleased himself: he too was struck, and surprised; and, carried away by his own feelings, he took, unconsciously, the best means of interesting hers.

But the interview ended not so soon; and they had scarcely sat down to the evening meal, when a fourth person was added to the party. He came in unannounced, and seemed to be a familiar and a favoured guest. Young, handsome, and prepossessing, with a frank and noble countenance, an air full of ease and grace, and an expression, in some degree, thoughtful, rather than sad, his coming, and the hour and manner in which he came, seemed to Henry Langford a warning, that if there were a day-dream dawning in his bosom, in regard to the sweet girl by whom he sat, it would be better to extinguish it at once. But feelings such as he

had never experienced before, came across his bosom; an eager and irritable anxiety, an inclination to retire into himself, and to watch the conduct of those around him; a tendency, whether he would or not, to be ungracious, not alone towards the stranger, but towards all; such were the strange and new sensations which he experienced. There is no stronger indication of a new passion having begun to take a hold of our heart, than a change in our ordinary sensations, in regard to things apparently trifling. Langford was a great inquisitor of his own bosom, and by that inquisition had, through life, saved himself from much pain. The examination, in the present instance, was made in a minute; and before the stranger had come round, and had been introduced to himself, he had asked his own heart more than one keen question. He had demanded, why he felt displeased at any addition to their party at all? why he felt disposed to deny to the stranger those graces of person and manner which he certainly possessed, and which were at once discernible? why he watched so eagerly the

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manner in which Sir Walter received him? why he gazed so intently upon Alice Herbert's cheek, to see if the tell-tale blood would rise up in it, and betray any secret of the heart? He asked himself all these questions in a moment, and suddenly felt that he had been dreaming — ay, dreaming sweet dreams, without knowing it. He banished them in a moment.

Sir Walter received the stranger kindly and familiarly, though with a slight degree of stateliness, which was from time to time observable in his demeanour to all. It was a stateliness evidently not natural to him, for his character was frank and kindly, and this perhaps was the only little piece of affectation that shaded — for it did not stain — a mind all gentleness, and warmth, and affection. He shook hands warmly with the young man, called him Edward, and suffered him to go round to shake hands with his daughter before he introduced him to their guest. While he did speak with Alice Herbert we have said that Langford's eye was fixed upon her cheek. It betrayed nothing, however: the colour varied not by a shade; and, though the

lips smiled and the eye sparkled as she welcomed him, there was no agitation to be remarked.

Langford was accustomed to read other hearts as well as his own, and the translation he put upon the indications he beheld was — not that there was no love between the stranger and Alice Herbert — but that the period of emotion was past. He was not usually an unskilful reader of hearts; but in interpreting that book it is necessary to take care that no passion in our own breast puts a false glose upon the text. Whether such was the case in the present instance will be seen hereafter; but, at all events, the knowledge Langford speedily obtained of what his own feelings might become taught him to regulate and restrain them. He resolved that the coming of the stranger should produce no change in his demeanour; that he would not forget the suavity of his manner, or let any one around remark an alteration which, to them, would be unaccountable, and which he never could have an opportunity of explaining.

After having given his visitor an oppor-

tunity of speaking for a moment to his daughter, Sir Walter Herbert introduced him to Captain Langford, saying, "Captain Langford, Lord Harold, the son of our good neighbour on the hill. Edward, Captain Langford, one whom I know you will esteem."

Langford gazed upon the new guest earnestly; but, whatever were his first thoughts, his mind almost immediately reverted to Lord Harold's situation in regard to Alice Herbert. The words in which the young nobleman's introduction to himself was couched, even more than what he had seen before, made him say in his own heart, "The matter is settled. Idle dreams! idle dreams! I thought I had held imagination with a stronger rein."

Lord Harold unslung his sword, and, giving it to one of the servants to hang it up behind the door, he sat down to supper with the party, and the conversation was renewed. The new guest looked at Langford more than once with a keen and scrutinising expression, though his countenance was not of a cast with which that expression suited, the natural one being of a frank and open character, with somewhat of indecision

about the mouth, but an air of sternness, perhaps of fierceness, upon the brow. There was nothing in it, however, either very shrewd or penetrating; but, nevertheless, such a look was not uncalled for, for the moment that Langford resumed his seat, after bowing to Lord Harold on their introduction, he turned deadly pale, and remained so for several minutes.

It might be that there was a struggle going on within to overcome himself, which none of those present knew or understood; but the outward expression thereof was quite sufficient to call the attention of the whole party; and it was, as we have said, some time before he had sufficiently mastered himself to resume the conversation with spirit. Even when he did so, there was a tone of sadness mingled with it, which rendered it quite different from what it had been before. It was no longer the gay, the sparkling, the playful. It was no longer the mountain current, rushing over a clear and varied bed, now eddying round every larger object in its course, now rippling brightly over the pebbles, which it seemed to gild as it flowed amongst them; but it had be-

come a deep stream, strong, powerful, and, though still clear and rapid, yet calm, and shady, and dark, from its very depth.

Lord Harold took his part in the conversation well and gracefully. A high education; and an early acquaintance with the Court, which had polished but not spoilt him, acting upon a heart, originally good, feeling, and generous, had improved what powers of mind he possessed as far as possible. His talents were, however, evidently inferior to those of Langford; and though he himself, apparently, was as much struck with the charm of the other's conversation as either Sir Walter or his daughter had been, yet he felt he was far surpassed by the new guest at the Manor House; and besides that sensation, which is in itself a heavy burden to be borne by those who seek to please, there was an indescribable something in Langford's presence which put a restraint upon him, and even made him bend down his glance before that of the stranger. It was late before any one prepared to depart, and the first who did so was Langford. He took leave of Sir Walter with

graceful thanks for his hospitality and kindness, and the old knight expressed a hope that they should see him several times again before he left the country; adding, "Of course you do not mean to limit your angling to one day."

"I really do not know," replied Langford with a somewhat melancholy smile; "I may be summoned to the capital at a moment's notice; but, at all events, I shall not fail to pay my respects here before I go. I will take your hint, Sir Walter, as a permission to continue my depredations on the trout."

"As often and as much as you please," rejoined the old knight. "The stream, as far as my manor extends, shall always contribute to your sport."

"I hope," said Lord Harold, taking a step forward with graceful courtesy, "that Captain Langford will not make Sir Walter's manor the boundary. Our lands march, and the stream which flows on beyond, my father will make as much at his service as that in Sir Walter's property is already."

Langford thanked him, though somewhat

coldly; but after he had taken leave of Miss Herbert, he turned to Lord Harold, and advanced as if to shake hands with him, then suddenly seemed to recollect himself, and, wishing him good night in a more distant manner, quitted the apartment.

Lord Harold remained behind for nearly an hour; and the conversation naturally rested on him who had just left them. The young nobleman praised him with a sort of forced praise, which evidently sprang more from candour and the determination to do justice than from really liking him. Sir Walter spoke of him warmly and enthusiastically, declaring he had seldom met any one at all equal to him. Alice Herbert said little, but what she did say was very nearly an echo of her father's opinion. After his character, his appearance, his manners, and his talents had been discussed, his state of fortune and history became the subjects of conjecture. Lord Harold was surprised when he heard that the Knight of Moorhurst had invited an unknown angler to his table, and had introduced him to his daughter; and, though he said no-

thing, yet Sir Walter marked the expression of his countenance, and was somewhat nettled that the young man, even in thought, should comment on his conduct.

Lord Harold, however, soon obliterated any evil impression from the mind of the kind-hearted old knight; and turning the conversation to other things, his spirits seemed to rise after Langford was gone, and he found opportunity of whispering a word or two in Alice Herbert's ear. Whatever words those were, they seemed to take her much by surprise, for she started, turned pale, then coloured highly; and, after a few minutes passed in what seemed uneasy silence, she rose, and retired to rest. Lord Harold gazed for a moment or two upon the ground, then looked earnestly at Sir Walter, as if there had been something in his mind that he would fain have spoken; but in the end, apparently irresolute, he took down his sword, gave orders to a servant to have his horse brought round; and, taking leave of the good knight, mounted, and galloped away, followed by two attendants.

The moon had just gone down, but the night was clear, and the heavens sparkling with a thousand stars. Lord Harold's way lay through some thick woods for about two miles, and then descended suddenly to the bank of the stream, where the trees fell away and left the bright waters wandering on through a soft meadow. As the young nobleman issued forth from among the plantations, he saw a tall dark figure standing by the river, with the arms crossed upon the chest, and the eyes apparently bent upon the waters. The sound of the horses' feet caused the stranger to turn; and although the darkness of the night prevented Lord Harold from distinguishing his features, the whole form and air at once showed him that it was Langford. He wished him good evening, as he passed, in a courteous tone, and was pulling up his horse to have added some common observation; but Langford did not seem to recognise him, and merely wishing him "Good night" in answer to his salutation, turned away and walked down the stream.

CHAPTER IV.

THERE has scarcely been a poet or a prose writer, in any country, or in any tongue, who has not first declared that there is nothing like love, and then attempted to liken it to something. The truth is, that fine essence is compounded of so many sweet things, that, though we may find some resemblance to this or that peculiar quality, which forms a part, we shall find nothing which can compare with the whole; — nothing so bright, nothing so sweet, nothing so entrancing, nothing so ennobling, — must we add, nothing so rare? Every fool and every villain impudently fancies that he can love; without knowing that his very nature renders it impossible to him. Every libertine and every debauchee talks of love; without knowing that he has destroyed, in his own bosom, the power of comprehending what love is; that he has shut down and battened the pure fountain that can

never be opened again. Every one who can feel a part of love, —and that, in general, the coarser part, — believes that he has the high privilege of loving; as though a man were to drink the mere lees, and call it wine. Oh no! How infinite are the qualities requisite, — each giving strength, and vigour, and fire to the other! There must be a pure and noble heart, capable of every generous and every ardent feeling; there must be a grand and comprehensive mind, able to form and receive every elevated thought and fine idea; there must be a warm and vivid imagination, to sport with, and combine, and brighten every beautiful theme of fancy; there must be a high and unearthly soul, giving the spirit's intensity to the earthly passion. Even when all this is done, it is but a sweet melody; the harmony is incomplete, till there be another being tuned alike, and breathing, not similar, but responsive tones. Then, and not till then, there may be love. Man, lay thy hand upon thy heart, and ask thyself. "Is it not so with me?" If so, happy, thrice and fully happy, art thou. If not,

strive that it may be so: for, rightly felt, the most ennobling of all earthly impulses is love.

The night that we have seen commence, passed over not tranquilly to any of the party which had been assembled at the Manor House. Alice Herbert laid her sweet limbs down on the couch which had so often brought her calm soft slumbers, but it was long ere she closed her eyes; and before she did so, there dropped from them some tears. Sir Walter lay upon his bed and thought, and a single sentence will show the subject of his meditation. "Poor boy," he said in a low tone, after thinking long, "he is doomed to disappointment."

Lord Harold tossed in feverish anxiety; and for many an hour Langford cooled his burning brow by the night air, on the banks of the stream Day was fast dawning, when he prepared to return to the inn; but ere he had crossed the bridge, a boy of ten years of age, or thereabouts, with fair curling hair, and a sunny countenance, crossed his path, saying quickly, "My master waits to speak with you."

"Where is he, Jocelyn?" demanded Langford.

"In the thick wood, in the manor park," replied the boy, "just above the stream — but I will show you."

"Go on!" said Langford; and they were both soon hidden by the trees.

The park of the old Manor House, in its laying out and arrangement, resembled the period of our tale; that is to say, it lay between two epochs. There was still, in the neighbourhood of the house, the old trim flower garden, with its rows of sombre yew trees; there was also that more magnificent kind of billiard table in which our robust ancestors used to take delight, the bowling-green; there were also several long alleys of pine and beech, carried as far as the inequality of the ground would permit; but then, beyond that again, came the park scenery, in which we now delight, — the deep wood, the dewy lawns, the old unpruned trees, with every here and there a winding walk, cut neatly amongst the old roots and stems, and taking advantage of all the most beautiful points of view. But we will dwell on such matters no longer; it is with pictures of the human heart that we have to do.

The dew was still upon the turf in the bowling-green, and in the long grassy walks of the flower garden, when Alice Herbert came forth to take her morning ramble alone. She was fond of tasting the fresh air of the early day; and enjoyed, as much as ever poet or painter did, the varied lights and shades cast by the rising sun over the world; lights and shades like the fitful visions of our boyhood, when the rising sun of life renders all the shadows longer and deeper, and the brightness doubly bright. In these morning expeditions, when she went forth to enrich one hour of her young life with treasures from the bosom of nature — treasures which she stored up, hardly knowing that she did so, to be employed long after they were gained, in decorating and embellishing all her being — there was scarcely any thing that met her eye, or any sound that met her ear, that was not marked and thought of; examined and commented upon; played with, embellished, and illustrated by her rich and poetical imagination. The fluttering butterfly, that passed before her, was not remarked for the beauty of its colouring alone;

but fancy found in it an image of a thousand other things; the mind moralised upon it, and the heart took the lesson home. The clouds even, the slow fanciful clouds, as writhing themselves into strange shapes, they floated over the spring sky, sweeping lightly with their blue shadows the soft bosom of the earth, gave equal food for imagination, and induced manifold trains of thought; and in the lark's clear melody, the ear of Alice Herbert heard something more than merely sweet sounds: her heart joined in his anthem; her thoughts took the musical tone of his sweet song; and her spirit rose upon his wings towards the gates of heaven.

It often happened that, in these walks, her father bore her company, and it was always a joy and satisfaction to her when he did so; for between father and daughter, there was that perfect reciprocity of feeling that made it delightful to her to be able to pour forth in his ear, all the thoughts that sprang up from her heart; and to hear, as she leant clinging to his arm, all the sweet and gentle, the simple, but strong-minded and noble, ideas which the face

of nature suggested to her father's fancy. To him she would listen well pleased, though many a creature of the great world might have scoffed at the simplicity of the words he uttered. To him she would tell all she herself felt; for never, from her childhood upwards, had her father checked the confidence of his child, even by a laugh at her young ignorance.

Thus, when she came down in the morning to go out, she would pause for a moment at her father's door, to hear if he were stirring. If there were sounds within, she would knock gently for admission; if there were no sounds, she would pass on her way. This morning her father was still sleeping when she came forth, for he had passed a somewhat restless night, and she went on alone with perhaps a more grave and thoughtful air than usual. She lingered for some moments in the flower-garden; and then, with a slow step, took her way up the gravel walk which led into one of the park paths, running along through the woods which crowned the bank above the stream.

The path she followed was like a varied but

a pleasant life, now emerging into full sunshine as it approached the edge of the bank, now dipping down into cool and contemplative shadow, as it wound in again amongst the trees, now softly rising, now gently descending, but never so rapidly as to hurry the breath or to hasten the footsteps. It was broad, too, and even; airy and free. Along this then, she wandered, casting off, as she went, the slight degree of melancholy that at first shaded her, and turning her mind to its usual subjects of contemplation. She thus proceeded for more than a mile, and had turned to go back again to the house, when, as she approached a spot where another path joined that which she was following, she suddenly heard quick footsteps coming towards her.

The mind has often, in such cases, rapid powers of combination, seeming almost to reach intuition; and though Alice Herbert had no apparent means of ascertaining who was the person that approached, yet she instantly turned pale, and became, for a moment, a good deal agitated. With woman's habitual mastery over her own emotions, however, she recovered her-

self almost immediately, and was walking on as calmly as before, when Lord Harold, as she had expected, joined her in her walk.

"Good morning, Alice," he said, "I have just seen your father, and have come out to meet you."

"Good morning, Edward," was her answer. "You must have been early up to have been over here so soon. But as my father has risen, let us go in to breakfast."

"Nay, stay with me a moment, Alice," said the young man — "it is but seldom that I have a few minutes alone with you!"

Alice made no reply, but continued on her way towards the house, with her eyes cast down and her cheek a little pale. Lord Harold at length took her hand and detained her gently, saying, "Nay, Alice, you must stay; I have your father's permission for keeping you a little longer, though I fear, Alice, from what I see, that I shall keep you here in vain. — Alice," he added after making an attempt to command his feelings, "dear Alice, did you mark the few words I said to you last night?"

Alice Herbert paused for a moment, and one might have heard her heart beating, so greatly was she agitated; but at length evidently exerting a strong effort of resolution, she looked up and replied, "I did mark them, Edward, and they gave me very great pain, and I have been grieved about them ever since."

"Why — why?" demanded Lord Harold, eagerly, "why should they give you pain, when it is in your own power to render them for me, at least, the happiest words that ever were spoken; and to give me an opportunity of devoting my whole life to make you happy in return?

"It is not in my own power, Edward," replied Alice, firmly but gently, not attempting to withdraw the hand that Lord Harold still held, but leaving it in his, cold, tranquil, ungiven though unresisting, "It is not in my own power."

"Then am I so very distasteful to you," he exclaimed, sorrowfully, "that no attention, no pains, no affection, no time can make you regard me with complaisance?"

Alice was pained. "Indeed, indeed, Edward, you do me wrong," she said. "You are not distasteful to me. I do regard you with complaisance. You know that your society is any thing but disagreeable to me; but yet, I cannot love you as you ought to be loved, as you have a right to be loved; nor can any attention, nor any kindness which you could show me, nor any time, make a difference in this respect. We have known each other from our childhood. You have shown me every degree of kindness, every sort of attention that any one can show. You have gained my esteem and my regard; I have always felt towards you almost as a sister; and perhaps that very feeling may have prevented me from feeling more.

"Nay, but, Alice, still hear me!" replied Lord Harold, earnestly — "hear me, hear me patiently; for remember, I am pleading for something more than life — for the whole happiness of life! You say you have regarded me as a brother, that you esteem me, that you do not dislike my society; were I to become

your husband, might not these feelings grow warmer — stronger?"

"They might, or they might not," answered Alice; "but, Edward, I must not, I cannot, I will not put them to the test. There is but one thing will ever induce me to marry any man — loving him deeply, strongly, and entirely, loving him with my whole heart."

"And is there such a man?" demanded Lord Harold suddenly, and at the same time fixing his eyes keenly upon her.

Alice lifted hers in return, full, but somewhat reproachfully to his countenance. "Edward," she said, "that is a question you have no right to put! However," she added, after a moment's pause, "because we have been companions from our childhood, because I do really esteem you, I will answer your question. There is no one who has such a hold of me; and till I meet with such, I will never marry any one."

"Then, then, dear Alice, there is yet hope!" he exclaimed.

"You construe what I have said very wrongly," she replied. "Do not! Oh! do not, Lord

Harold, by taking words of kindness for words of encouragement, force me to speak that harshly which I would soften as much as may be."

"Nay, Alice," answered Lord Harold, "your lesson comes rather late to produce any benefit to me. I fear that I may have mistaken, before now, words and acts of mere kindness for words and acts of encouragement. I have—I acknowledge it—I have entertained hopes; I have thought that Alice sometimes smiled upon me."

"Now, Edward, for the first time since I have known you," replied Alice, "you are ungenerous, you are unkind. Brought up together from childhood, seeing each other constantly, looking upon you almost as a brother, esteeming, as I acknowledge I esteem you, I could but act as I have acted. Has there been any change in my conduct towards you from what that conduct was five, six, or seven years ago? Ought there to have been any change in my conduct towards you, till I knew that there was a change in your feelings towards me? Would you not have been the first to accuse me of caprice, of unkindness, of forgetfulness of old regard and

early friendship? Oh! Edward, why should any thing thus come to interrupt such friendship?—to bring a coldness over such regard?"

"Pardon me, pardon me, Alice," said Lord Harold, "I was wrong to refer to my hopes; but I meant not to say that you had willingly given them encouragement; I meant rather to excuse myself for entertaining them, than to blame you. Blame you I did not—I could not. All that you have done has been gentle and right. Do not then, Alice, do not let any thing which has passed to-day interrupt our friendship, or bring, as you say, a coldness over your regard for me. Let me still see you as heretofore; let me still be to you as a friend, as a brother. There is no knowing what change may take place in the human heart, what sudden accidents may plant in it feelings which were not there before. Some good chance may thus befriend me—some happy circumstance may awaken new feelings in your heart."

"I cannot suffer you to deceive yourself," she said. "Such will never be the case. It would be cruel of me, it would be wrong both

to myself and you, could I suffer you to think I should change. Oh no! This cannot have taken so strong a hold of you as not to be governable by your reason. I shall ever esteem you, Edward, I shall ever be your friend, but I can be nothing more; and let me beseech you to use your powers of mind, which are great, to overcome feelings which can only make you unhappy, and grieve me to hear that you entertain them."

She spoke in a manner, in a tone that left no hope; but though he had become deadly pale, he seemed now to have made up his mind to his fate. — "Fear not, Alice," he said, "fear not! Whatever I suffer you shall hear no more of it. Love you, Alice, I shall ever, to the last day of my life; but trouble you with that love, will I no more. There is only one thing I have to request; and that I do from no idle motive of selfish vanity, from no fear of being pointed at and pitied by our friends as Alice Herbert's rejected lover, but from motives of some importance to all. Do not let it be known that such words have passed between us as have been spoken this day."

"You cannot suppose me capable of speaking such a thing at all," cried Alice, both mortified and surprised.

"Oh no!" he said; "but I mean to ask that it may remain a secret even from my father."

"With your own father," said Alice, "you must of course deal as you please, but with mine ——"

"Yours knows my object in coming to-day already," interrupted Lord Harold, "and must of course know the result. Mine has given his fullest consent, upon my honour, to my seeking your hand. All I ask is, that he may not know I have sought it, and it has been refused. Let me visit here as usual — let me ——"

"I had heard," said Alice, "that you were going up to London. Why not do so at once?"

"I will," he answered; "I will. But that will only be for a few days; and, at my return, there must be no difference, Alice — Promise me that — promise, if but for the sake of early friendship — for the sake of childish companionship."

"Well," she said, after a moment's pause;

" well, but there must be no mistaking, Edward."

He looked pained. " Do not suppose, Alice," he replied, " that I have any ungenerous object. When I ask this favour, I ask it for your sake as well as my own ! You must not ask me how or why — but trust me."

" I will," she said; " I will ! I have always found you honourable and generous; but, indeed, let me say, without thinking me unkind, that for your own sake, with such feelings as you possess towards me, it were better to be here as little as may be till you have conquered them."

" That will never be, Alice," he answered; " that will never be. It is enough that you shall never hear more of them. But here comes Silly John, as people call him," he added, bitterly. " It is fit that a fool should break off a conversation begun with such mad and silly hopes as mine ! Let us go back to the manor, Alice; we shall never get rid of him."

The person who thus interrupted the painful interview between Lord Harold and Alice

Herbert, was one of a class now much more rarely seen than in those times. There were, it is true, even then, hospitals and asylums for the insane, but they were few; and Silly John, as he was called, was not one of those whom the men of that day would ever have dreamed of putting in confinement. He was perfectly harmless, though often very annoying; and the malady of the brain under which he suffered, was rather an aberration of intellect than the complete loss of judgment. It went a great deal farther, indeed, than in the case of the *half saved*, in that most beautiful of biographies, that quintessence of rare learning, and excellent thought, *The Doctor*. He was decidedly insane upon many points; and upon all, the intellect, if not weak, was wandering and unsettled. His real name was John Graves: he had been an usher in a small school, and consequently was not without a portion of learning, such as it was; but his great passion was for music and poetry: the one would call him into a state of sad though tranquil silence; the very name of the other would excite him

to an alarming pitch of loquacity. Withal, he was not without a certain degree of shrewdness in some matters; and what was still more singular and apparently anomalous, his memory of events and dates was peculiarly strong, and his adherence to truth invariable.

He now approached Alice and her companion with a quick step, dressed in an old wide coat of philomot colour, with a steeple-crowned hat, which had seen the wars of the great rebellion, rusty and battered, but still whole, and decorated with two cock's feathers which he had torn himself from the tail of some luckless chanticleer. His grey worsted hose were darned with many a colour; and in his lean but muscular hand, he carried a strong cudgel, which steadied his steps, being slightly lame in the right leg. When he had come within a few feet of the lady and her suitor, he stopped directly in the path, so that they could not pass without going amongst the trees; and, for a moment or two, looked intently in both their faces, with his small grey eyes peering into theirs, and his large head leaning considerably

to the side, so as to bring the heavy ashy features quite out of the natural line.

"Well, John, what do you want?" demanded Alice, who had been familiar with the sight of the poor man from her childhood. "Is there any thing I can do for you?"

"No, Mistress Alice; no, my pretty maid!" replied the man. "Only take care of your sweet self, lady. I came up to be at the conference — wherever there is a conference there am I — and I heard you and Harold talking when I was on the other side of the bushes; and now, lo! the conference seems over."

"It is so for to-day, at least, John," replied Lord Harold; "so now let us pass, my good man."

"Call me not good, Harold," he replied.

> "'There yet was good but one
> That trod this cold earth's breast,
> And now to heaven he's gone
> For our eternal rest.'

But you see I was right, Harold. They call me silly; but I am not silly in matters of love. I told you how it would be this morning as you crossed the bridge."

"My good man, I heard you say something," replied the young nobleman; "but what, I did not know."

"You should have listened then," replied the madman. "Always listen when any one speaks to you! Did you not learn that at school? Always listen, especially to the masters. Now, if you had listened you would have heard: I told you she would not have you."

Lord Harold turned red, and Alice felt for him; but he replied, good-humouredly, as they walked on with the madman following them,—"I rather imagine, John, you have been listening to some purpose."

"No, I have not been listening, but I heard," replied the madman; "and two other pairs of ears did the same."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Lord Harold; "and who might they be?"

"Oh, the fox and the dog!" replied Silly John, in a rambling way.—"The fox and the dog, to be sure. The dog wanted to go away when you came, but the fox would not let him, saying, that if they stirred they would be heard

and seen, and then folks would wonder what they came there for so early of a morning;—was not that a cunning fox? But I could have told him what they both came there for, if I had liked; but that would never do."

"And pray what was the dog's name?" demanded Lord Harold, in a quiet tone, well knowing that an appearance of curiosity would often set their half-witted companion rambling to different subjects from that which had before engaged him.

"Oh, every dog has a name," replied the madman; "but they change their names as well as men and women, Harold. Now this dog's name was once Lion, and it is now Trusty, and to-morrow it may be Lord. I have known dogs have twenty names in their lives. God help us! we are queer creatures!—and talking of dogs, I had a dog when I was second master at Uppington School,"—and so he rambled on.

There was now no stopping him, or recalling him to the subject; and he followed Alice and Lord Harold, keeping close to the side of the latter, and talking incessantly, but now so deeply

engaged in the wild and disordered stream of his own thoughts, that, taking no farther notice of the conversation which the young nobleman renewed with his fair companion and continued with a low voice till they reached the house, he went on volubly, touching upon a thousand subjects, and darting after every collateral idea that was suggested by a chance word spoken even by himself.

CHAPTER V.

THE day which we have begun in the last chapter, passed over without any other event of importance. Lord Harold left Alice at the door of the house, mounted his horse, and departed. Alice communicated to her father all that had taken place, and found him more grieved than she had expected, but not at all surprised. The angler was again seen fishing in the stream, as the first shadows of evening began to fall; but his efforts were not so successful as before, and he retired early to rest.

The following morning was again a bright one, — too bright indeed for his sport; and in the course of the forenoon Langford made his appearance at the manor house and paid a lengthened visit. At first he found only Sir Walter Herbert at home, but the visitor seemed to enjoy his conversation much; and the good old knight suffered it to be sufficiently evident that the society of his new acquaintance was

any thing but disagreeable to him. In the course of half an hour, however, Alice Herbert herself appeared; and not only did Langford's eye light up with pleasure, but the conversation which had before been of somewhat a grave, if not of a sad cast, instantly as if by magic became bright and sparkling, like the dark woods in the fairy tale, which, by a stroke of the enchanter's wand, are changed to crystal palaces and illuminated gardens. Alice, without knowing what had passed before, felt that her presence had produced a change. She felt, too, that her society had an influence upon Langford, that it called forth and brought into activity the treasures and capabilities of his mind; and, if truth must be spoken, it was not unpleasant to her to feel that such was the case.

We may go further still and look a little deeper into her heart. Her acquaintance with Langford, short as it had been, had proved most disadvantageous to the hopes and wishes of Lord Harold; but, in saying this, we mean no more than we do say. She was not — hers was not a nature to become in so short a time — in love

with Henry Langford; nor indeed so rapidly to become in love with any one on the face of the earth. She was capable of deep, and intense, and ardent feeling; and the depths of her heart were full of warm affections. But the waves of profound waters are not easily stirred up by light winds—a ripple may curl the surface, but the bosom of the deep is still. She was not in love with Langford; but had she not known him, it is possible—barely possible, that though she would not have accepted Lord Harold at once, she might, as many a woman does, have suffered him to pursue his suit till she felt herself bound in honour to give him her hand, without feeling any ardent attachment towards him even at last, and trusting for happiness to esteem and regard. Her acquaintance with Langford, however, had given her feelings a more decided character; had taught her that she could not marry any one whom she did not absolutely love. It went no farther: but, as far as that, the sort of surprise and pleasure which his conversation had given her certainly did go; and now on their second meeting there might

be a kind of thrilling satisfaction at her heart in finding that her society had an influence over him, that his eye sparkled with irrepressible light, that his thoughts and his manner and his feelings seemed to take a deeper tone as soon as she appeared.

So went on the conversation for some time; both feeling, while it proceeded, that though they might be talking of indifferent subjects, they were thinking a good deal of each other; and thus they established between themselves all unwittingly a secret sympathy, which but too often throws wide the doors of the heart, to let in a strange guest who soon takes possession of the place.

The course of the conversation speedily brought Sir Walter to remark, "You must have visited many foreign countries, Captain Langford, and apparently not as our young men usually do, in a hurried and rapid expedition, to see without seeing, and to hear without understanding. I must confess it was the case with myself, in my young days; but the habit of travel was not then so much upon the nation as at present,

and it was something for a country gentleman to have been abroad at all."

"I have been very differently situated, Sir Walter:" replied his guest; "though not born upon the Continent, being, thank God! an Englishman, yet the greater part of my early life was spent in other lands. My mother was not of this country and she loved it not—nor indeed had occasion to love it. We resided much in France, and much in Italy: some short time too was passed in Spain; but those visits were in early years; and I have since seen more of various countries while serving with our troops under Turenne. I was very young, indeed a mere boy, when the British forces in which I served were recalled from the service of France; but I was one of those who judged, perhaps wrongly, that England had no right to leave her allies in the midst of a severe war, and who therefore remained with the French forces till the peace was concluded. I have since served for many years in several other countries; and I have always been of opinion, that while there is no life which affords more opportunity for idleness

than a soldier's, if his natural disposition so lead him, there is no life which gives so much opportunity of improvement, if he be but inclined to improve."

Alice had listened eagerly and attentively, for Langford had come near a subject which had become of interest to her—his own fate and history. Sir Walter listened too with excited expectation; but their guest turned the conversation immediately to other things, and shortly after took his leave and quitted them.

When he was gone, Sir Walter himself could not refrain from saying, "That is certainly an extraordinary young man. Poor fellow! I much fear, Alice, that he is one of those whom the faults of their parents—the weakness of a mother, and the vices of a father—have sent abroad upon the world, without the legitimate ties of kindred."

"Oh! no, indeed, my dear father," cried Alice, "I cannot believe that. He would never speak so boldly and so tenderly of his mother, if there were any stain upon her name. He has twice mentioned her, and each time I have seen

a glow of mingled love and pride come up in his countenance."

"Well, I trust it so," replied Sir Walter, "for otherwise no situation can be more lamentable—with no legitimate relations of his own, with no hope of uniting himself to any upright and ancient House; for that bar sinister must always be an insuperable objection to every family of pure and honourable blood."

Perhaps Alice might not see why it should be so; but she knew her father's prejudices upon that point well, and she dropped the subject.

In the mean while the person who had thus afforded them matter for speculation returned to the inn, sat, read and wrote for some time in his own chamber, and then sauntered forth with a book in his hand, and his rod and line left behind, in order to meditate more at leisure by the side of the stream, wherein, during the whole of the preceding evening, he had lost his time in unsuccessful angling. He was not at all inclined to renew his sport; and if truth were to be spoken, he

took his book more to cover his meditations than to prompt them.

Let us draw back the curtain, however, for a moment, and look through the window in his breast, in order to see what were the motives and causes which rendered even that sport which has been called, "The contemplative man's recreation," too importunate an occupation for the body, to suffer the agitated mind to deliberate with ease. We have seen what had been the effect of Alice Herbert's society upon him, during the first evening of their acquaintance: he could not but admire her beauty, for it was not of that cold and abstracted kind which may be seen and commented on by the mind, without producing any other emotion. It was of what we may call the most taking sort of beauty; it was of that sort which goes at once to the heart, and thence appeals to the mind, which cannot but admit its excellence. But still, even had he fallen in love that night, it might have been called love at first sight, and yet have implied a very false position. During each of the preceding years, he had spent nearly

six weeks in the small country town we have described; and, in the neighbourhood of Alice Herbert, he had heard from every lip but one account of her character. He had spoken of her with many, and every one with whom he spoke loved her.

He might therefore be well pleased to love her too, when he found that to virtue and excellence were joined beauty, talents, and sweetness, such as he had never beheld united before. We have seen also what was the conclusion he had come to when he beheld her in the society of Lord Harold; and we may add, that he was more mortified, disappointed, and angry with himself, than he was at all inclined to admit. When, however, on the following day — placed in a situation from which he could not retreat unperceived — he had been an unintentional, and even an unwilling witness to a part of her conversation with Lord Harold, and when from that part he learned undeniably that she rejected that young nobleman's suit, he felt grateful to her for reconciling him with himself, and for removing so speedily the

mortification of the preceding evening. That which had been at first but a mere spark upon Hope's altar, and had dwindled away till it seemed extinct, blazed up into a far brighter flame than before: and in their second interview he felt as if an explanation had taken place between them, and that she had told him, "I am to be won, if you can find the right way and use sufficient diligence."

But still there was much to be thought of, there was much to be considered, there were peculiar points in his own situation, which rendered the chance of gaining her father's consent to his suit almost desperate. He felt — he knew, that if he lingered long near her, he should love her with all the intensity of a strong and energetic mind, of a generous and feeling heart; he felt too from indications which he did not pause to examine, but which were sufficient for him, that there was a chance of his winning her love in return. But then if the giving his heart and the gaining hers, was but to produce misery to both, ought he — ought he to pause for a moment, ere he decided on

flying for ever from a scene of such temptation? But then came in again the voice of hope, representing prospects the most improbable as the most likely, changing the relative bearings of all the circumstances around him, and whispering that even for the bare chance of winning such happiness, he might well stake the tranquillity of his whole life. Such were the thoughts that agitated him, with many another on which it is needless here to touch. Such was the theme for meditation on which he pored while wandering on beside the stream.

The afternoon had gone by, and the brightness of the day had become obscured, not only by the sinking of the sun, but by some large heavy clouds which had rolled up, and seemed to portend a thunderstorm. Langford had looked up twice to the sky, not with any purpose of returning home, for the rain he feared not; and, in witnessing the grand contention of the elements, he had always felt an excitement and elevation from his boyhood. There had always seemed to him something in the bright light of the flame of heaven, and in the

roaring voice of the thunder, which raised high thoughts, and incited to noble efforts and great and mighty aspirations. He looked up twice, however, to mark the progress of the clouds, as, writhing themselves into strange shapes, they took possession of the sky, borne by the breath of a quiet sultry wind, which seemed scarcely powerful enough to move their heavy masses through the atmosphere.

When he looked up a third time, Langford's eye was attracted to the opposite bank by the form of the half-witted man, Silly John, making eager signs to him without speaking, although, from the point at which he stood upon this slope, Langford could have heard every word with ease.

As soon as he saw that he had caught the angler's eye, however, the half-witted man called to him vehemently to come over, pointing with his stick towards a path through the trees, and shouting "You are wanted there!"

Langford paused, doubting whether he should cross or not; for though the stream was shallow, and the trouble but little, still the man that

called him was, as he well knew, insane, and might be urged merely by some idle fancy.

While he hesitated, however, the other ran down the bank, exclaiming, when he had come close to the margin, "Quick, quick, Master Harry, or ill may happen to her you love best!"

Langford stayed not to ask himself, who that was; but crossed the stream in a moment, demanding, "What do you mean, John? what ill is likely to happen to ——"

He was about to add the name of her who had so recently and busily occupied his thoughts; but suddenly remembering himself, he stopped short, and the half-witted man burst into a laugh, exclaiming, "What! you wo'n't say it, Master Harry? Well, come along with me quick; you will find I am right. I settled it all for you long ago, when I was an usher at Uppington School; and I said you should marry her, whether the old lord liked it or not. But come on! come on quick! There are two of the foxes down there waiting by the dingle, just beyond the park gates. You know

what foxes are, Master Harry? Well, you never thought to go fox-hunting this evening; but I call them foxes because the law won't let me call them by any other name; and she has gone down to the old goody Hardy, the blind woman, and to talk with her. Then she will have to read a chapter in the Bible, I warrant; so that she will be just coming back about this time, and then she will meet with the foxes; though, after all, they are waiting for Master Nicholas, the collector's clerk, I dare say; but they will never let her pass without inquiry."

While he spoke these wild and rambling words, he walked on rapidly, followed by Langford, who was now seriously alarmed; for, although what his companion poured forth was vague and incoherent, yet there were indications in it of something being really wrong and of some danger menacing Alice Herbert. He remarked, too, that the half-witted man, as he walked along, frequently grasped the cudgel that he carried, and lifted it up slightly, as if to strike: but it was in vain that Langford tried

to gain any clearer notion of what was amiss, for his questions met with no direct reply, his companion answering them constantly by some vague and irrelevant matter, and only hurrying his pace. Thus they proceeded through the wood that topped the bank over the stream, across a part of the manor-park to a spot where a belt of planting flanked the enclosed ground on the side farthest from the house and the village. It was separated, by a high paling, from a lane which ran along to some cottages at the foot of an upland common, and which lane itself was every here and there broken by a little irregular green, ornamented by high trees.

The ground around, indeed, seemed to have cut off from the park, and probably had been so in former times.

There was a small gate opened from the park into the lane, at the distance of about a quarter of a mile from the spot at which Langford and his companion approached the paling, and at that hour of the evening they could discern the gate with the path leading up to it; for, though the sun was just down, it was yet clear twi-

light. Towards that gate Silly John rapidly bent his steps; but they had not yet reached it when Langford suddenly heard a scream proceeding from the lane on his right hand, and apparently close to them. The memory of the ear is perhaps stronger and keener than that of the eye; and, though he had never heard that voice in any other pitch than that of calm and peaceful conversation, the distinctive tone was as discernible to the quick sense in the scream he now heard, as it would have been had Alice Herbert simply called him by his name. He paused for no other indication: in a moment he was through the belt of planting; and, vaulting at a bound over the paling, he stood in one of the little greens we have mentioned, an unexpected intruder upon a party engaged in no very legitimate occupation.

On the sandy path which marked the passage of the lane across the green stood Alice Herbert, with a tall powerful man grasping her tightly by the right shoulder, and keeping the muzzle of a pistol to her temple, in order, apparently, to prevent her from screaming, while

another was busily engaged in rifling her person of any thing valuable she bore about her. So prompt and rapid had been the approach of Langford, that the two gentlemen of the road were quite taken unawares; and the one who held her was in the very act of vowing, that he would blow her brains out if she uttered a word, when the muzzle of the pistol he held to her head was suddenly knocked up in the air by a blow from the unexpected intruder. The first impulse of the robber was to pull the trigger, and the pistol went off, carrying the ball a foot or a foot and a half above the head of Alice Herbert.

Instantly letting go his grasp of the terrified girl, the man who had held her threw down the pistol and drew his sword upon his assailant. But Langford's blade was already in his hand; and his skill in the use of his weapon was remarkable, so that in less than three passes which took place with the speed of lightning, the robber's sword was wrenched from his grasp and flying amongst the boughs of the trees, while he himself, brought upon his knee, received a severe wound in his neck as he fell.

At that moment, however, another terrified scream from the lips of Alice Herbert called her defender's attention; and turning eagerly towards her, Langford at once perceived that it was for him not for herself that she was now alarmed. The robber whom he had seen engaged in rifling her of any little trinkets she bare about her had instantly abandoned that occupation, on the sudden and unexpected attack upon his comrade; and was now advancing towards Langford, better prepared than the other had been, with his drawn sword in one hand, and a pistol in the other. The moment which Langford had lost in turning towards Alice had been sufficient to enable the man whom he had disarmed to start upon his feet again, and to run to the spot where his sword fell; — and the angler found that in another instant he should be opposed single-handed, and with nothing but his sword, to two strong and well-armed men. He did not easily, however, lose his presence of mind; and, seizing Alice Herbert's arm with his left hand, he gently drew her behind him, saying, "Crouch

down low that you may not be hurt when they fire. I will defend you with my life."

Scarcely had he spoken, when the second ruffian deliberately presented the pistol at him, and fired. Langford felt that he was wounded in the left shoulder, and the blow of the bullet made him stagger; but, in the course of a soldier's life, he had been wounded before more than once, and, as far as he could judge, he was not now severely hurt.

His two assailants, however, were rushing fiercely upon him, and the odds seemed strong against him; but at that moment another arm, and a strong one, came in aid of his own. His half-witted guide had, by this time, scrambled over the paling, as well as his lameness would permit; and, with the cunning of madness, had crept quickly behind the two plunderers. As soon as he was within arm's length, which was but a moment after the shot was fired that wounded Langford in the shoulder, he waved his cudgel in the air, and struck the man who had discharged the pistol a blow on the back of the head, which laid him prostrate and stunned upon the ground.

Langford's quick eye instantly perceived the advantage, and he rushed forward, sword in hand, upon the other man. Finding, however, that the day was against them, the ruffian fled amain, after making an ineffectual effort to raise his companion; and, in a moment after, the sound of a horse's feet, as it galloped rapidly away, was heard in the road above.

"It is right that every man should have his nag," said the half-witted man, turning over the prostrate robber with his foot; "but thou wilt ride no more, Simpleton! — I wonder if these clerks of St. Nicholas have lightened the burden of Master Nicholas, the clerk," he continued, turning as if to speak to him whom he had guided thither; but by this time Langford had returned to the spot where Alice Herbert stood; and, holding both her hands in his, was congratulating her upon her escape, with all those feelings sparkling forth from his eyes which might well arise from the situation in which he was placed, combined with all the thoughts and fancies which had lately been busy at his heart.

Alice looked up in his face with an expression that could not be mistaken. It was full of deep gratitude. Perhaps there might be something more in it, too; and, without listening much to vanity, he might have read it, "I would rather be thus protected by you than by any one I ever knew."

There are times and circumstances which draw two hearts together in a moment, which might otherwise have been long in finding each other out; and such were the times and circumstances in which they stood. She was very pale, however; and Langford was somewhat apprehensive, also, that the worthy personage who had galloped off, might return with more of his fraternity: so that, after a few words of congratulation and assurance to Alice, he called to his half-witted companion, "Come, John, come! Leave the scoundrel where he is: we have not time to make sure of him; and we had better get into the park and towards the manor as fast as possible."

Thus saying, he drew Alice's arm within his own, and led her on to the gate of the

park, speaking eagerly to her of all that had occurred. The madman followed more slowly; but they had scarcely gone a hundred yards within the paling when Langford perceived that his fair companion was turning more and more pale every moment. Her eyelids, too, drooped heavily, and she said at length, in a low voice, "I am very faint." Scarcely had she spoken the words, when he felt her beginning to sink, and, placing her upon a bank beneath one of the old trees of the park, he bade their crazy companion hasten as fast as possible to the house, and bring up some of the servants to assist in carrying their fair mistress home.

The man seemed to comprehend at once, and set off to obey; but Langford did not wait for the return of his messenger ere he endeavoured to recall Alice to herself. From a little brook which ran down towards the stream, he brought up some water in his hands, in order to sprinkle her face therewith; but as he did so something struck his eye which he had not perceived before, and which made his heart sink with sensations that he had never felt before, even in scenes of carnage and horror such as

man seldom witnesses. The sleeve of Alice Herbert's white dress on the right arm was dripping with blood, and Langford, in agony lest she should have sustained some injury, after casting the water in her face, tore her sleeve open to seek for the wound. No hurt was to be found, however; no blood was flowing down that fair smooth skin; the stains were less in the inside of her garment than on the out, and the blood which he now saw trickling down his own arm — the arm on which she had been leaning — so as to dabble the back of his hand, showed him whence that had proceeded which had stained her dress.

The cool air, the recumbent position, and the water he had thrown in her face, had, by this time, begun to recall Alice to consciousness; and the joy of seeing her recover, of finding that she was unhurt, and of having successfully defended her, threw Henry Langford off his guard, so far at least, that he pressed a long kiss on the fair hand he held fondly in his own. Alice's languid eyes met his as he raised his head, but there was a slight smile upon her lip, and he saw that he had not offended.

Her first faint words, as soon as she had sufficiently recovered herself to speak, were, "You are hurt! Oh, Captain Langford, I am sure you are very much hurt; and my being weak enough to faint when I found the blood trickling down my arm, has delayed you but the longer in getting assistance. For Heaven's sake leave me here, and seek some one to attend to your wound as soon as you can. I shall be quite safe here. I have no fear now, but am only afraid that I cannot walk very fast; and, indeed, you should not be without help any longer."

Langford assured her that his wound was a trifle, that it was a mere nothing, that the blood he had lost could do him no injury. But Alice would not be satisfied; and, finding that Langford would not go without her, she insisted upon proceeding immediately. She trembled very much, and could walk but slowly; but she persevered in her determination, and had half crossed the park, when they were met by Sir Walter himself, and four or five of the servants. The feelings of the father at that moment may be conceived, but cannot be described: he threw his arms round his daughter,

exclaiming, "My child, my dear child! But are you not hurt, my Alice? Yes, yes, you are! You are covered with blood!" and his own cheek grew deadly pale.

"It is his, my father," replied Alice, leaning upon Sir Walter's bosom, and holding out her hand to Langford: "I am quite unhurt, but he is wounded, and I am afraid seriously. He gave me his arm to help me home, and, in a minute, my whole sleeve was wet with blood. I was foolish enough to faint when I saw it, and that has made us longer; so pray let somebody look to his wound immediately."

All eyes were now turned upon Langford; and, while Sir Walter hurried him and his daughter on to the Manor House, he loaded her deliverer with both thanks and inquiries. Langford assured him, the wound that he had received was a mere trifle, that the ball had lodged in the flesh, and that he could move his arm nearly as well as ever; and then, to change the subject, he recounted to Sir Walter and Alice as they went, how he had been led to the spot where he had found her, by the unfortunate half-witted man, John Graves.

"He shall wander about the world no more, if I can provide him with a home," exclaimed Sir Walter, turning to look for the person of whom they spoke; but he was no longer with the party, and they could hear his voice in the woods at some distance, singing one of the old melodies of those times.

When they reached that door of the Manor House which opened into the park, Langford was about to take his leave, and go on to the village to seek for a surgeon. Alice cast down her eyes as he proposed to do so; but Sir Walter grasped him by the hand, and led him gently in, saying, "In no house but mine, Captain Langford! Do you think, after having received such an injury in defending my daughter, that we would trust you to the tendance of an inn?"

Langford made but slight opposition. If there had been hesitation in his mind, and doubt at his heart, when he had gone forth that afternoon to wander by the side of the stream, doubt and hesitation were by this time over; and, after a few common-places about giving trouble, he accepted Sir Walter's invitation, and became an inmate of one house with Alice Herbert.

CHAPTER VI.

We must now return for a short space of time to the spot beneath the park wall where we left one of the assailants of Alice Herbert, stunned by a blow from the cudgel of John Graves. He lay there for some minutes perfectly motionless and perfectly alone. At length, however, the sound of a horse's feet was heard cantering lightly along the road, and a goodly gentleman, dressed in a fair suit of black, and mounted on a dun fat-backed mare, made his appearance in the lane, and approached rapidly towards the spot where the discomfited wayfarer lay.

The good round face of the new comer was turned up towards the sky, calculating whether there was light enough left to let him get to Uppington in safety, or whether he had not better pause, and sleep at the little neighbouring town; and the first thing that called his attention to the object in his path was his dun mare who had never before shied at any thing

on earth, recoiling from the body of the robber so violently, as to throw forward the good round stomach of the rider upon her neck and shoulders with a sonorous ejaculation of the breath.

"Ugh! Gad's my life! who have we here?" exclaimed Master Nicholas the clerk of the collector at Uppington, whose saddle bags were in truth the tempting object which had brought forth the gentlemen of the road, when they had been unseasonably diverted from their purpose by the appearance of Alice Herbert: "Gad's my life! who have we here?" and, dismounting from his mare, with charitable intent he bent down over the stranger.

There were two or three particulars in the sight that now presented itself, which made the heart of the collector's clerk beat rather more rapidly than was ordinary. In the first place, the stranger had in his hand a drawn sword; in the next place, a discharged pistol might be seen lying within a foot of his nose; the sand was stained with blood hard by, and in the countenance of the prostrate man, the collector's

clerk, who was a great physiognomist, discovered at once all the lines and features of a robber. The feelings of the good Samaritan vanished from his bosom as soon as he had made this discovery, and, stealthily creeping away as if afraid of waking a sleeping lion, the gentleman in black regained his mare's back, made her take a circuit round the little green, and riding on as hard as he could to the country town we have described in the commencement of this book, sent out a posse of people to apprehend the body of the stunned or defunct robber.

Before this detachment reached the spot, however, the personage it sought was gone. Shortly after the clerk had passed he had begun to recover, and speedily regained his legs, looking about him with some degree of wonder and amazement at the situation in which he found himself. While busy in recalling all that had passed, the sound of some one singing met his ear; and, in another minute, the head and shoulders of John Graves appeared above the park paling. The half-witted man saw that the robber was upon his feet again; and, with-

out any hesitation he proceeded to clamber over the fence, and approach his former antagonist.

"I have come to apprehend thee!" cried the madman, laying his hand boldly upon the collar of the robber's vest. Strange to say, the freebooter not only suffered him so to take hold of him, but very probably might have even gone with him, like a lamb to the slaughter — so much was he overpowered by surprise, and so little did he imagine that such an act would be performed without some power to support it — had not two or three horsemen, at that moment, come galloping down the lane as hard as they could ride. A single glance showed the captive of John Graves that there was an infinite accession of strength on his side. He accordingly twisted himself out of his mad antagonist's grasp in a moment, and prepared to lay violent hands upon him in return.

Silly John, however, seemed by this time entirely to have forgotten his purpose of arresting the robber; and looking round him as the others came up, with an air of wonder indeed, but

not of alarm, he muttered, "More foxes! more foxes!"

The worthies, by whom he was surrounded, in the mean time, held a sharp consultation, of which he seemed to be the object; but, at length, one of them exclaimed, "Come along, come along! Bring him with you, and do what you like with him afterwards. If you stay disputing here, you will have the whole country upon you."

After a moment's hesitation, the plan proposed was adopted, and two of the robbers, seizing upon John Graves, dragged him along between them, at a much quicker rate of progression than was at all agreeable to him. After the first ten or twelve steps, he resisted strenuously, and showed a disposition to be vociferous, which instantly produced the application of a pistol to his head, with a threat of death if he did not keep silence. He was quite sufficiently sane to fear the fate that menaced him; and the sight of the pistol had an immediate effect both upon his tongue and his feet, which now moved rapidly onward.

The paths pursued by his captors were as tortuous as might well be, and the lane, which had been the scene of their exploits, was quitted almost immediately. For nearly an hour they hastened on as fast as they could drag the half-witted man along; but, at length, much to his relief, the whole party stopped before a small lonely house on the edge of a wide common. There was a tall pole, with a garland at the top, planted before the door; and a bush hung above the lintel, giving notice to all whom it might concern, that entertainment for man, at least, was to be found within. The sound of the strangers coming in a moment drew out the landlord of the place, who seemed not at all surprised to see the company which visited his house at that late hour; and his own pale brown countenance bore, in its hawk-like features, an expression very harmonious with the calling of his guests.

"Quick! take the horses up to the pits," he said, speaking to the boy of all work, who appeared round the corner; and shading the candle which he carried in his hand from the

wind, "Why, Master Hardie, who have you got there? By my life, it is Silly John! What, in the devil's name, did you bring him here for?"

"Why, Master Guilford," replied one of the men, but not him to whom he spoke; "Here Hardie and Wiley have got themselves into a pretty mess. They would go out against the captain's orders to try a bit of business on a private account, and they have got more than they bargained for, I take it. Here is Hardie with a cut in his neck, which has made him bleed like an old sow pig; and Wiley was left for dead by a blow of this same fellow's cudgel whom we have got here. Hardie came up for us two upon the downs, or else it is likely Wiley would have been in the pepper-pot at Uppington by this time; for we caught his horse half a mile up the green lane."

This conversation had taken place while the party was alighting; but no sooner was that operation concluded than the landlord pressed them to come in quickly, and Silly John was hurried by them into a large room behind, with a long deal table, and several settles and

benches, for its sole furniture, if we except a polished sconce over the chimney, from which a single candle shed its dim and flickering rays. Underneath the light, with his two arms leaning on the table, and his head resting again upon them, the curls of the fair hair falling over the sleeves of his coat, and his face hidden entirely, sat the boy Jocelyn, whom we have before mentioned; and the gang of plunderers had been in the room several minutes before he was aware of their presence, so sound was the slumber in which he was buried.

"Hark ye, Master Doveton!" said the landlord, as soon as the door was shut, and addressing the man who had given him an account of his companions' adventure; "hark ye! I think it a very silly thing of you to bring this fellow up here."

"Why, we did not know what else to do with him, Guilford," answered the other. "Wiley wanted to shoot him as soon as he heard that it was his cudgel which had beaten about his head so foully."

"You shall do no harm to him in my house, Master Doveton," replied the other; "the man is a poor innocent whom I have known this many a year; and I won't have him hurt."

"Thank you, Master Guilford, thank you!" exclaimed the poor fellow, as he heard this interposition in his favour. "These foxes have almost twisted my thumbs off. Do not let them hurt me, Master Guilford, and I'll give you the crooked sixpence out of my tobacco-box."

"You see, Guilford," replied Doveton, while one or two others crowded round to hear the consultation, "the thing is, we risk this fellow betraying us. He has seen all our faces, and could, I dare say, swear to us any where."

"What signifies *his* swearing?" demanded the landlord; "he is mad as a March hare; nobody will believe his swearing."

"Ay, but he may give such information as will lead them to ferret us out," replied another of the gang: "now, we do not want to hurt the man; but he must be got out of the way some how."

"He shan't be got out of the way by foul means, howsoever, Master Doveton," replied the landlord, whose new character of protector was pleasant to him. "Come, nonsense! make him sit down and drink with you, and he'll forget all about it. He'll sing you as good a song as any man in the country; and, if he promises not to tell any thing he has seen, you may be quite sure of him."

"Truth — truth! Master Guilford," cried the object of their discourse. "If my godfathers and godmothers at my baptism had known what they were about, they would have called me Truth. Why not Truth, as well as Ruth? I had a sister they called Ruth, though she never found out a Boaz, poor girl! but died without being a widow — how could she, when she was never married? If I had been married to Margaret Johnson myself, I should not have gone mad, you know: — but I always tell truth. Did any body ever hear me tell a lie in my life?"

So he rambled on, while the friendly landlord busied himself in setting out, hastily, the

table in the midst, for the coming entertainment of his worthy guests; and, at the same time, lent a sharp ear to the consultation which they held together, concerning the madman. That consultation was not of a nature to satisfy him entirely; for, though it seemed that the party were willing to follow his counsel so far as keeping poor Silly John to drink with them, a word or two was spoken of its being easy to do what they liked with him when he was drunk, which did not at all please Master Guilford.

As he went round and round the table, however, setting down a cup here, and a platter there, he gave the boy Jocelyn a sharp knock on the elbow, which roused him from his sleep; and, the next time he passed, the landlord whispered a word in his ear. The boy took no particular notice, at the moment, but rubbed his eyes — yawned — spoke for a moment to Doveton and the rest, and then disappeared from the room.

Large joints of roast meat soon graced the board; and the hall assumed very much the appearance of the palace of Ulysses, in the days of

the suitors; except that, in all probability, it was a little more cleanly, and that the beef was not killed at the end of the table. Silly John was made to sit down between the two men, Hardcastle and Wiley, who were certainly not his greatest friends; but they nevertheless loaded his platter with food, which he devoured with a wonderful appetite, and filled his cup with ale from a tankard called a black jack, which circulated freely till supper was over.

The gentlemen into whose society he was thrown, however, were not of a class to rest satisfied with even the best old humming ale; and, while one body of them demanded the implements and materials for making punch, another called for a pitcher of burgundy, which, notwithstanding the size, character, and appearance of the house, was produced as a matter of course. John Graves had his ladleful from the bowl, and his glassful from the pitcher; and Doveton, who was beginning to get merry, and eke good-humoured in his cups, insisted upon having one of the songs the landlord had so much vaunted. The

madman required no pressing; the very name of music was enough for him; and, with a full sonorous voice, and memory which failed not in the slightest particular, he began an old song, one of the many in praise of punch.

"Now I will sing you a song in return, Master John," cried the rough-featured fellow called Hardcastle, who had been one of the assailants of Alice Herbert.

"Why, Hardie, thou canst never sing to-night," replied Doveton. "Thou canst never sing to-night, with the slit in the weasand thou hast gotten down there. It will let all the wind out, and thy song will be like the song of a broken bellows or bursten bagpipe."

"Never you mind that, Doveton," replied the other; "my song shall be sung, if the devil and you stand at the door together; a pretty pair of you!" and he accordingly proceeded to pour forth, in a voice of goodly power, but very inferior in melody to that of the madman, a song well suited to the taste of his auditors: —

THE WATERY MOON.

The wat'ry moon is in the sky,
Looking all dim and pale on high;
And the traveller gazes with anxious eye,
  And thinks it will rain full soon:
And he draws his cloak around him tight,
But if I be not mistaken quite,
He will open that cloak again to-night
  Beneath the wat'ry moon.

The wat'ry moon is sinking low,
The traveller's beast is dull and slow,
And neither word, nor spur, nor blow
  Will bring him sooner boon.
But the saddle-bags are heavy and full,
And all too much for a beast so dull,
Up this steep shady hill to pull,
  Beneath the wat'ry moon.

The wat'ry moon is gone to bed;
The traveller on his way has sped;
The horse seems lighter the road to tread,
  And he'll be home very soon:
But with a young man he met on the hill,
Who lightened his load with right good will,
Hoping often to show the same kindness still,
  Beneath the wat'ry moon.

Scarcely had Hardcastle done his song, amidst great applause on the part of his companions, when a step was heard in the neighbouring passage, which made the whole party start, and look in each other's faces. The next moment, however, the door was opened, and the personage of whom we have already spoken more than once, under the title of Franklin Gray, stood amongst them. It was very clear that he was an unexpected, and not a very welcome guest at that moment; but, at the same time, the whole of the fraternity who occupied the hall, immediately put on the most agreeable look in the world, and strove to appear delighted with his coming. His brow was somewhat cloudy, indeed, but his bearing was frank and straightforward; and sitting down in a chair which had been placed for him with busy haste by the others, he fixed his eyes sternly upon the man who had suffered from the cudgel of Silly John, demanding, "What is all this I hear, Wiley?"

The personage he spoke to hesitated to reply, bit his lip, tried to frown, and to toss his head; and, before he had made up his mind what to

say upon the occasion, the one who had been called Doveton answered for him.

"I believe, captain," he said, "the best way when one has been in the wrong, is to own it, and to tell the truth. Now we have all, more or less, been wrong, I believe. Wiley, there, heard that Master Nicolas, the clerk of the collector at Uppington, was coming along the green lane this evening, with all the receipts; and he thought it would he a good sweep for us all, if we could get the bags. He asked us all to go, but only Hardcastle would have a hand in it, though the rest of us promised to exercise our horses upon the hill above, and come down if they were likely to be caught. Well, they fell in with a young lady first, and they thought they might as well have her purse too—"

Franklin Gray set his teeth hard, but said nothing; and Doveton, who saw the expression on the other's face, went on—"It was very wrong, I know, Captain Gray,—quite contrary to your orders to do any thing of the kind;—and more especially to attack a woman, which you spoke of the other day. But, however,

temptation, you know, captain — temptation will get the better of us all at times. As I was saying, however, some one came to help the lady, with this poor silly fellow; and Hardcastle got a cut in his neck that won't be well this ten days, and Wiley a broken head, which I hope will teach him better manners for the rest of his life."

The brow of Franklin Gray never relaxed its heavy frown, except at the moment when Doveton announced the corporeal evils which had befallen the two adventurers as a reward for their disobedience; and then a grim smile, for a moment, curled his lip. It passed away, however, instantly, and he demanded, looking at Wiley, "Do you know who it was that came to the lady's help?"

"Oh! I marked him well enough," replied Wiley. "I shall not forget him; and, if ever the time comes——" The rest of the sentence was lost between his teeth; but he went on in a louder tone immediately after, adding, "He is one of your good friends, Captain Gray. I have seen you walking with him twice; and I

think he might have known better than interrupt a gentleman in his occupations. We should not have hurt the young woman! What business was it of his?"

"The only pity is," said Franklin Gray, coolly, "that he did not send a bullet through your head."

"He has got one in his own shoulder," said Wiley, doggedly; "for I saw the ball strike, and I hope it may do for him."

"If he chance to die of it," said Gray, in the same calm, stern tone, "I will blow your brains out! Remember what I say, Master Wiley: you know me! Nay, a word more. When we joined together, and came down here, it was for a particular purpose, and you all swore an oath to obey my directions, and submit to my laws for the next three months. You and Hardcastle have scarcely been a fortnight with me, but you break your oath; and when I especially told you not to enter into any petty enterprise, because we had a greater in hand which you would ruin if you did, you go and disgrace yourself by attacking a girl. Now

it seems that you have received some punishment in the very act, and therefore I shall inflict no other; but be warned, both of you! I am not a man to be trifled with; and if once more either of you disobey, be sure that I will then be as severe as I am now lenient. Can any one tell," he continued, "who the lady was that was attacked by them? I can only suppose that it was old Sir Walter's daughter."

"Just so! just so!" cried Silly John Graves from the other end of the table; "it was pretty Mistress Alice Herbert, and good Mrs. Alice Herbert, too, which is better than pretty: and you, too, seem to be good, which is better than brave — very good, indeed, for a fox, and a leader of foxes. I vow and protest you have read them a homily as fair as any in the book: and now, pray let me go; for I have sung them a song, such as they won't hear again in a hurry."

"Why have you brought him hither?" continued Franklin Gray, in a sharp tone, without making any reply to John Graves's observation. "Was it to end folly by madness, and conclude

your own disobedience by insuring its own punishment?"

It took some time to explain to the leader of the band the motives which had induced them to bring the half-witted fellow up thither, and how he had been found busy in the laudable occupation of arresting Wiley when the rest of the party came to the rescue.

"And therefore," exclaimed Gray, interrupting the speaker, "because he was likely to recognise Wiley, and bring him to the gallows, Master Wiley persuaded you to drag him up here, that he may recognise us all, and bring us to Tyburn along with him. It was worthy of you, Master Wiley."

"You are wrong for once, captain," said Wiley; "if I had had my wits, I would have taken care that he should recognise no one. Dead men tell no tales, I said then; and I say so still."

"They tell tales that are heard long years after!" replied Franklin Gray, with melancholy sternness. "Ay! and often, when time has flown, and the hot blood has become cool, and

the black hair grey, and the strong limbs feeble, and easy competence has soothed regret, and either penitence or pleasure has stilled remorse; I tell ye, my masters, that often then, in the hour of security, and tranquillity, and luxury, the avenger of blood needlessly spilt — the avenger, who has slept so long — will awaken, and the merest accident bring forth proof fit to lead us to shame, and condemnation, and death. No, no! I will deal with this man; but I must first go forth, and ascertain what are likely to be the consequences of this act of folly. In the meantime, Harvey, I leave him under your charge! See that no evil befal him; and keep as quiet as may be. No roaring, no singing, mark me! and, if possible, abstain from drink."

Thus saying, he left them; but returned much sooner than they had expected, and, when he appeared, was evidently much moved. His dark brow was gathered into angry frowns, and his bright eye flashed in a manner which made those who knew him best augur some sudden violence. He sat down at the table,

however, and remained for a moment in silence, with his brow leaning upon his hand.

"I am foolish enough," he said, at length, "to follow the weak custom of the world, and be more angry at the bad consequences of an evil act than I was at the act itself: but I will not yield to such folly. What think ye, sirs? I find that the whole county is already in a stir against us on this bad business. There have been large parties of men from Uppington, scouring the lanes in every direction. Messengers have been sent out from the manor to call a general meeting of the magistrates for to-morrow. There is foolish Thomas Waller and silly Matthew Scrope, and all the men who are likely to be the most active and violent against us, called to consult at the Talbot; and nothing is to be done but for each one of us to take his own way out of the county till the storm has blown over. Let us all meet this day week at Ashby. That is seventy miles off; and we can there see how to pass the time till we can return here, and pursue our great enterprise in safety. But one word more. We

are all men of honour; and, if any of us should chance to fall into the hands of the enemy, we can die in silence: that is enough."

"But what is to be done with him?" demanded one or two of the fraternity, pointing to the unhappy lunatic; while, at the same time, some of the others came forward and whispered to their captain, apparently on the same subject, with somewhat sinister looks. But Gray replied, sternly, "No! I say, no! Leave him to me: I know him well, and he may be trusted. I shall remain a day, or perhaps two, behind you. Now to horse, and depart, but one by one."

The tone in which he spoke courted no reply; and the band quitted the room, every man according to his own peculiar manner of doing such things: for there is as much art in quitting a room as in entering one, though the first is much more important as an evolution. However, one walked straight out, without saying a word to any body; one spoke for a few minutes with a companion, and then, suddenly turning, passed through the door; one entered

into a conspiracy with another, to go out conversing with each other; one staid a moment to empty the remains of the tankard into a large cup, and drink it off at a draught; and another (Doveton) went up to Gray, shook him by the hand, wished him well, and told him he was very sorry that he had even connived at Wiley's scheme. The last was the only one who, in fact, suffered to appear the feelings which affected all the others, and embarrassed them in their exits. They all felt they had been wrong, with the exception of him who emptied the tankard; they all felt that Gray had just cause to be angry and indignant; but one feeling or another — pride, vanity, shyness, and many others — keep nine hundred and ninety-nine men out of a thousand from opening their lips under such circumstances. It is only the thousandth who candidly and straight-forwardly walks up to the truth, and says, "I am sorry I have done wrong."

At length, the room was left untenanted by any but Franklin Gray and his half-witted companion, who sat twirling his thumbs at the

table, apparently lost to the recollection of what was passing around him. He was roused, however, by the voice of Gray pronouncing his name, and found the keen dark eye of the robber fixed intently upon him.

"John Graves," said Gray, "do you know what those men pray me to do with you? They say that, if I let you go, you will betray what you have seen this night, lead people to the places where we meet, or give evidence against us if ever we are in trouble; and they say that the only way is, to silence your tongue for ever."

"No, no, no!" cried the poor man, fully awakened to his situation by such words; "pray don't! pray don't! I will never tell any thing about it, as I hope for God's mercy, and that he will restore my wits in another world. Wits? I have not got wits enough to tell any thing: besides, I won't, indeed I won't."

"If you will swear," said Gray, "by all you hold dear, never to tell any one what you have seen to-night; never to point any one of us out, by word, or look, or gesture, as men you have seen do this or that; never to lead any one to this place, as our place of meeting ——"

"I will! I do!" cried the madman solemnly, "I will betray you in no respect."

"So far, so good," answered Gray; but that is not all. I give you your life, when every voice amongst us but my own was for taking it; and with it you must promise, if ever I call upon you, to do me a piece of service."

The other gazed earnestly in his face; seeming, by a painful effort, to gather together all his remaining fragments of mind, to cope with one who, he feared, was trying to lead him astray by the bribe of life. "What is it," he demanded, "what is it I am to do? I will break none of the commandments. I will neither rob nor murder, nor help to rob or murder. Ah, man! remember, though perhaps I am crazy, as people say, I have a soul to be saved as well as others. If it must be, I will die sooner than do these things."

"I require no such things at your hands," replied Gray, moved a good deal by his companion's earnestness. "I may only require you to guide me on my way in a moment of difficulty; to lead me by the paths which, I am

told, no one knows so well as you do; and, perhaps, to guide me into a house ——"

"Not to take other men's goods!" cried Graves. "No, never! Guide you I will, in moments of difficulty; lead you I will, when you want it; but not to commit a crime, for then I am a sharer."

"What I shall ask you," said Gray solemnly, "is, to commit no crime. My purpose shall be to take no man's goods from him, but rather to restore to him who is deprived of it that which is his own."

"Swear to me that!" exclaimed the other, "and I will lead you any where."

"I swear it now!" answered Gray; "and remember that, having sworn it, I shall never ask you to do any thing but that which you now agree to do; and in consideration of which I give you your life. No questions, therefore, hereafter, even were I to ask you to lead me into the heart of Danemore Castle."

The madman laughed loud. "There should be none!" he answered; "for I know why you go."

"Indeed!" said Gray, with a smile: "but it is enough that you are willing. I trust to your word in every thing, and doubt not that you will keep it to the letter. Hast thou any money, poor fellow?"

"Nothing, but my crooked sixpence in my tobacco-box," replied the man, looking ruefully in his interrogator's face. "Pray, do not take that from me: it and I are old friends."

"I would rather give than take from thee," replied his companion. "There is a guinea to keep thee warm; and now thou art at liberty to go: so fare thee well."

As he said this, he turned away, and left the room; and poor Silly John continued gazing upon the gold piece in his palm with evident delight, though he held some curious consultations with himself, regarding the lawfulness of taking money from such hands as those which had bestowed it. In those consultations much shrewd casuistry was mingled with much simple folly; but, in the end, the counsel for the defence, as usual, got the better, and he slipped the gold piece into his pouch, chuckling. He

then crept quietly out of the inn; and, although it may seem strange to attach ourselves so particularly to a personage of the class and character of Silly John, yet must we, nevertheless, follow him a little farther in his wanderings.

By the time that all this had passed, it was near midnight; and, instead of taking his way back to the little town of Moorhurst, the half-witted man walked on, with his peculiar halting gait, towards the high dim moors that might be seen rising dark and wild against the moonlight sky, like the gloomy track of difficulties and dangers which we too often find, in life, lying between us and the brighter region, lighted up by hope, beyond. On the edge of the moor was a low shed and a stack of fern, which the poor fellow must have remarked in some of his previous peregrinations; for towards these he directed his steps at once, pulled down a large quantity of the dry leaves, dragged them into the shed, and, having piled them up in a corner, nestled down therein, though not without

having addressed a prayer and a thanksgiving towards the God whom, in all his madness, he never forgot. We will not inquire whether that act of adoration was couched in wild and wandering terms; whether it was connected or broken, reasonable or distracted: it was from the heart, and we are sure it was accepted.

By daylight he was upon his way, and an hour's walk brought him into the deep woods that backed the splendid dwelling of Lord Harold and his father, which was known in the country by the name of *The Castle;* for very few of the good folks round had ever seen any other building of the kind; and it was therefore *their castle* par excellence. It was by the back way that Silly John now approached the mansion, seeming quite familiar with all the roads and paths about the place; but, before he reached the spot where the wood, cut away, afforded an open space, in which were erected the principal offices, he was met by a person, at the sight of whom he bent down his head, and glanced furtively up with his eye, like a dog who does not very well know whether it will be kicked or caressed.

The figure that approached him in the long dim walk was that of a tall thin woman, of perhaps fifty years of age, dressed in dark-coloured garments, exceedingly full and ample, with a sort of shawl of fine white lace pinned across her shoulders; while over a broad white coif, which she wore upon her head, was a black veil drawn close, and crossing under the chin. Her features were high and sharp; her eyes fine, and fringed with long black eyelashes; her lips thin and pale; her teeth very white; and her complexion, which must have been originally dark and troubled, now sallow, without the slightest trace of red in any part of the cheek. She did not frown; but there was a cold calmness about her compressed lips and tight-set teeth, and a piercing sharpness about her clear black eye, which rendered the whole expression harsh and forbidding. Athough passed the usual period of grace, yet she walked gracefully and with dignity, and bore every trace of having been a very handsome woman, though it was impos-

sible to conceive that she had ever been a very pleasing one.

From the moment she saw him, her eye remained fixed upon Silly John, steadfastly, but not sternly; and he advanced towards her crouching, as we have said, and sidling with a degree of awe which he would not have shown to the highest monarch on the earth from any reverence for mere external rank. But the sharp and seemingly cold decision of her character was exactly that which most strongly affects people in his situation; and "Mistress Bertha, the housekeeper of Danemore Castle," the servants used to declare, "could always make silly John Graves in his senses when she pleased." Although no smile curled her lip, and her countenance underwent no change, the tone of her voice, while she spoke the first few words to him, at once showed the half-witted man that he was not out of favour.

"Why, how is it, John," she asked, speaking with a very slight foreign accent; "how is it that you have not been up at the Castle for these six weeks?"

"Because I got my fill at the town and the manor, Mistress Bertha," replied the other.

"Ay, that is it!" she exclaimed; "that is it! if every one would but say it. Men go for what they can get; and when they can get their fill at one place, they seek not another. The only difference between madmen and the world is, that madmen tell the truth, and the world conceals it."

"I always tell the truth," cried the half-witted man, caught by the sound of a word connected with one of his rooted ideas; "I always tell the truth; do not I, Mistress Bertha?"

"Yes; but you are only half mad," answered the housekeeper; "for you can sometimes conceal it too. But go in, John; go into the Castle; and, if you go along the long back corridor below, you will find my little maid in the room at the end. Bid her give you the cold meat that Lord Harold left after his breakfast."

"After his breakfast!" cried the half-witted man. "He has breakfasted mighty early! But now — oh, I guess it; he has gone to London. I heard her tell him to go."

" Heard who tell him?" demanded Mistress Bertha, with an air of some surprise.

" Why, pretty Mistress Alice Herbert, to be sure," replied the other. " Did not I hear all they said as they came down the walk, and through the woods?"

" Nay, then," said the housekeeper, smiling, as far as she was ever known to smile; " I suppose he is gone to buy the wedding ring, and have the marriage settlements drawn up. Methinks he might have told me too."

" Nay, Mistress Bertha," replied the other, " no wedding rings! no marriage settlements! Mistress Alice is not for him!"

A slight flush came over the pale cheek of her to whom he spoke. " Not for him!" she exclaimed; " not for him! Does she refuse him, then?"

" Yes, to be sure," replied John Graves; " every man is refused once in his life. I was refused myself, for that matter; but I was wise, and resolved that I would never be refused again."

" Art thou lying, or art thou speaking truth?"

demanded Mistress Bertha, fixing her eyes sternly upon him. "Did she refuse him?"

"Truth!" replied the man: "I always speak truth! She refused him as sure as I am alive: nothing he could say would move her. I knew it very well, and I told him so before; but he would not believe me."

Bertha stood, and gazed upon the ground for several minutes. "I do believe," she said, speaking to herself; "I do believe that things possessed without right have a doom upon them, which prevents them from bringing happiness even to those who hold them, unconscious of holding them wrongly. Now is this poor boy, notwithstanding all his great wealth and high expectations, destined to be crossed in this long-cherished love, which was to make both himself and his father so happy! Poor youth! how long and deeply he has loved her! How his heart must have ached when I talked about her this morning! and shall I help to take from him any thing he possesses?"

"We ought always to do what is right, Mistress Bertha," exclaimed the half-witted

man, whose presence she had totally forgotten. "And both you and I know that right has not always been done."

"Out upon the fool!" exclaimed the housekeeper. "Hold thy mad tongue! How darest thou to prate of right and wrong, not having wit to keep thee from running thy head against a post! Get thee in before me! Thou shalt give the Earl an account of this refusal!"

John Graves slunk away before her flashing eye and angry words, like a cowed dog, looking ever and anon to the right and left, as if for some means to escape; but she kept him in view, following close upon his steps till they both entered the large mansion before them.

CHAPTER VII.

The injury which Henry Langford had received was more severe than he had at first imagined. The extraction of the ball was very painful, and so much inflammation succeeded that he was confined to his room for several days. The delay and restraint in truth annoyed him as much as the pain and restlessness which he suffered, for at that time there were various important objects before him which he was prevented from pursuing with the calm but rapid energy of his character. He had one great consolation, however, — that the injury he had sustained was received in defence of Alice Herbert; he had one great pleasure in the midst of his sufferings — to feel sure that she was thinking of him, and thinking of him with interest. Alice Herbert did not attend him as a lady of romance; she did not dress his wounds or sing to lull him to repose. She did not even show him that care and atten-

tion, visiting his sick chamber often in the day, making cooling drinks with her own hand, and pressing him to take care of himself, and to follow exactly the surgeon's directions, which many a lady of that very age would have done. Nay, more, strange as it may seem, she did not display half so much interest towards him as she might have done towards any person in whom she was not so deeply interested. She took care, indeed, that every thing should be done for his comfort and convenience; but she did so seeming to do it as little as possible. She did give up every thought to him, and to how he might be best brought back to health, especially during the three first days, while the surgeon shook his grave and not very sapient head, and declared that the result was doubtful; but she took great care that nobody should know that her thoughts were so employed.

When at length he was permitted to leave his room, she received him with a degree of timidity that was not without its share of tenderness. It seemed as if she felt that towards him she was placed in a different relationship from that in

which she stood towards any other human being, and the feeling was strange and new to her, but it was not without its pleasure. Langford's manner, too, soon dispelled every thing that was in the least embarrassing in such feelings, and left them all their delight.

With fever and loss of blood he had been greatly weakened, and there was a degree of languor in his conversation during the first two or three days, which rendered it to Alice Herbert perhaps more interesting even than it had been before. It was still bright and sparkling; it was still rich and deep: but there was a softness, a gentleness in it, which was the more winning, from the contrast between the power of the thought and the mildness of the manner. The mind of Alice, too, had undergone some change, from what reason she scarcely knew. She was becoming fonder of grave thoughts; she was more pensive; and once or twice, even when she was alone, she blushed deeply at finding herself guilty of some little act of absence of mind, — a thing she never had accused herself of before. She blushed because she was conscious that on

these occasions she was thinking of Henry Langford; her meditations indeed were such as she needed not to have blushed for: they were all pure and upright, and good; but it was for their intensity that she blushed, not for the matter of them.

There was in Langford's manner towards her, however, a tenderness, a gentleness, an appealingness, if we may use the term, which, without words, very soon told her, that if she thought deeply of him, he thought no less deeply of her. Her father was about this time a good deal absent from home; for the attack upon his daughter, at the very gates of his own park, had raised his indignation to a high pitch; and he declared that he would not rest, night or day, till he had rooted out of the country the band of villains who deprived it of its ancient peace and security. Meetings of the justices in the neighbourhood were accordingly held for the purpose of causing the apprehension of the offenders; and at all these Sir Walter, who was himself an active though kindly magistrate, was present taking a prominent part; so that, as

we have said, he was much absent from home, and Alice Herbert was left not alone, but in company with Henry Langford.

Such circumstances seldom lead but to one result, and must have done so now, had not that result been long before reached by the heart of each. Langford, however, was extremely careful: he could not, indeed, so far govern his manner as to prevent it from betraying the growing tenderness, the daily increasing love that he felt towards Alice Herbert; but not a word ever escaped his lips to confirm what his manner told unwittingly. They spoke of all the various matters, on all the multitude of themes, which are to be found in the treasury of rich and well cultivated minds; there was not one fine subject in all the mighty universe, there was not an object in all the tide of bright and beautiful things, which the God of nature has poured through every channel of the immense creation, that might not become for them a topic of discourse, for in all they could find sources for enjoyment and admiration.

And thus they went on conversing upon indifferent things, deriving amusement and

instruction, and employment for imagination from all. Yes! conversing of indifferent things, but conversing as people who were not indifferent to each other; speaking of matters which had no reference to themselves, yet each learning as they spoke but the more to admire, to esteem, to love the other.

There were looks, too — unintentional looks — that betrayed the secrets of the heart more than words. When Alice Herbert's eyes were turned away, Langford would gaze at her with long and tender earnestness, till she turned towards him, and then would immediately withdraw his eyes. But still, more than once, she caught those eyes fixed upon her; and felt sure that they had been so gazing long. She, too, while working or drawing, and conversing at the same time on any passing subject that was before them, would occasionally, when his rich eloquence poured forth in a current of more than ordinary brightness, raise her eyes to his face with a look of deep eagerness which made his very heart thrill.

Thus it went on, as might be naturally ex-

pected, and, before three weeks were over, Alice Herbert found that there was but one happiness for her on earth; and Henry Langford knew that his fate was decided, as far as intense and true and ardent love decides, for weal or woe, the fate of every man capable of feeling it.

For the last two or three days, however, Alice had remarked that he was more thoughtful, perhaps more grave, than usual. The magisterial labours of her father were now nearly at an end. Though none of the offenders had been taken, he had satisfied himself that their bad neighbours had been driven from the vicinity; and two or three daring robberies, which were committed about this time in the next county but one, confirmed him in the belief. He was, therefore, much more at home with Alice and with him whom we may now call her lover, and the delight which he took in Langford's society was every day more and more apparent, and every day more sweet and reassuring to his daughter's heart. The regard of the old man and the young man was evidently reciprocal, for Langford was one of those who could feel and

estimate to the full the beautiful and natural simplicity, the straight-forward single mindedness of the old knight of Moorhurst.

However, during the two or three days which we have just mentioned, as having displayed an unusual degree of gravity in Langford's manner, his eyes would often rest with a sort of doubtful and inquiring look upon the face of Sir Walter; and Alice also fancied that her father was pale, thoughtful, and uneasy. Langford, too, though scarcely fully recovered, had been out several times alone, pleading urgent business; and, in short, it was clear, that in the bosoms of many of the party tenanting the manor-house there were busy thoughts, which for some reason they concealed from each other.

Such was the state of things just three weeks after the affray with the robbers; when one evening Alice had walked out alone, in order to think over all that she felt, and all that she had remarked, without having her thoughts interrupted even by the conversation of those who were the objects of her meditation. She had

now learnt not to go very far from the house when alone, and she sat down for a moment in a seat at the end of the bowling-green, which was a small, oblong piece of ground, hollowed out between high banks on every side, which banks, like the flat little lawn that they surrounded, were covered with smooth green turf, and were surmounted on three sides by a range of fine yew trees, cut with exact precision into the form of a high wall. Her father before she left the house had seated himself in his arm chair in the library to take the afternoon nap in which he sometimes indulged, and Langford whom she had not seen for nearly an hour, she believed to have gone to the village.

It was not so, however; and ere she had remained long in that spot, thinking over her situation, and somewhat schooling herself for feelings which she could not suppress, she heard a rapid footfall coming from the direction of the house, and the thrill that went through her heart, the agitation that took possession of her whole frame, showed the quick memory of love. Had she yielded to her first impulse, though

there was no one upon earth in whose society she felt so happy as in that of the person who now sought her, she would have risen and made her escape through the trees behind her. She restrained herself, however, and sat still, with a beating heart indeed, and with her breath almost suppressed, while Langford, with a quick step, crossed the bowling-green, and approached her. Although she strove to do so, although she would have given worlds to appear unconcerned, she could not raise her eyes to welcome the visitor with her usual smile, and she suffered him to traverse the whole open space as if she had not seen him, only looking up with a glance of consciousness, and a deep blush when he came close to her.

Langford was agitated too; but the agitation showed itself merely in a great degree of paleness. His step was firm, his manner was calm and decided.

"I have sought you," he said as he came up; "I saw you go away from the house, and thought you had gone to the flower garden."

Alice strove hard to reply as usual, but all

that she could say was, " I thought it would be cooler here;" and there it stopped: she could go no farther.

" We shall be less likely to be interrupted, too," replied Langford, " and that, with me, is a great object at the present moment, for I wish much to speak with you — to detain you for half an hour — nay, perhaps, for a whole hour with me alone."

Alice could now reply nothing indeed; but with her eyes bent down, and the tears ready to rise up in them, she suffered Langford to take her hand and to proceed.

He seldom did anything like other men, acting upon principles, which we may hereafter pause upon for a moment; and he did not now come at once to the declaration which Alice felt was hanging upon his lips, but went on to speak of things apparently of far less interest. " You will give me this half hour, or this hour, I know, sweet lady; and afterwards you shall give me more or not as you please. I had some idea of detaining you before you went out; but I am glad I did not, because I think

when one has any thing of great importance to say — anything, I mean, which deeply interests and moves us, in which the whole feelings of our hearts are engaged—I think that there is no place we can so well choose as in the face of nature, under the free canopy of heaven. One's spirit feels confined and crushed in chambers built by hands; one's heart has not room to expand; one's soul has not space to breathe forth at liberty."

He saw that by this time Alice's emotion had a little subsided; she had even ventured at the last words to look up in his face; and he now went on, coming nearer to the matter of his thoughts. "Alice," he said, "dear Alice, I would beseech you not to agitate yourself, and yet I must speak to you on subjects which will create much emotion."

Did Alice think, even for a moment, that he was too confident, that he was too sure of possessing such great influence over her mind? She did not; but even if such an idea had presented itself for a moment, it would have been done away immediately, for he went on. "I know that

I must greatly agitate and move you; for if my brightest and dearest hopes are true, that heart is too deep and too intense in all its feelings, not to be agitated by the words you must hear, and the words you must speak; and if those hopes are not true; if—like so many other of life's illusions, they have given me a moment of brightness, but to plunge me in the deeper night, that heart is too gentle and too kind to tell me that the whole of the rest of my life is misery, without feeling wrung and pained. Alice, I have sought you, not to tell you that I love you; for that you must have known long ——"

"Oh no!" she cried, suddenly looking up through a flood of bright and happy tears, "Oh no! I might think so, but I could not be sure of it!"

Langford smiled, and pressed her hand to his lips. "Do not think me presumptuous," he answered, "do not think me presumptuous when I say, that those words and that look have already given a reply, and made me most happy. Oh no! I am not presumptuous, for

I know Alice Herbert too well not to feel that such words, and such a look, may well spare my agitating her farther on one subject at least. Yet tell me, Alice, am I as happy as I dream myself to be?"

For a moment she made him no answer, and he added, "Oh speak!"

"What can I say, Langford?" she murmured in a low voice; "you who know the human heart so well, must have read mine perhaps too deeply."

He gave up a few moments to thanks and to expressions of his joy; but after that, a graver shade came upon his countenance, and he said, "There is much, much my beloved, to be spoken of between us. With that bright confidence which you shall never find misplaced, you have yielded your heart and your happiness to one of whose rank and station, fortune and family, you know nothing."

"I know himself," replied Alice, gazing up in her lover's face, "and I know that he is everything that is noble and good."

"May I ever justify such feelings, Alice,"

replied Langford; "but still, my beloved, it is necessary that you should know something of me, especially as I may have to draw still more deeply upon your confidence, to call for trust and reliance such as is seldom justified. During the last three or four days, Alice, my mind has been in a state of hesitation and doubt as to what course I should pursue. I felt that under some points of view I ought, in propriety, to communicate my feelings to your father in the very first place; and yet, Alice, as I was sure that you knew that I loved you, as I had determined to bind you by no promise till your father's full consent was obtained, and as I had to confide in you, to consult with you, to ask your advice even upon a matter that must affect the whole course of my life, my fortune, my station, and every thing, — a matter, which for many reasons I do not wish to communicate to your father at present, I have judged it best, and determined, to open my whole heart to you at once."

Alice listened with a slight look of anxiety, for she had entertained some hopes that Lang-

ford had communicated his purpose to her father before he came to seek her; but still her apprehensions of opposition from one who loved her so much and esteemed him so highly, were not great, and she only replied, "But, of course, you do not wish our engagements to be concealed from my father."

"Not *our* engagements, sweet Alice," replied Langford; "for while I hold myself bound for ever to you, I ask you to make no engagement, I suffer you to make none, till you have your father's full consent; and my love for you shall be told to him immediately. But let me first inform you how I am situated. The property which I actually possess is but small; sufficient, indeed, to maintain me in comfort and independence as a gentleman, but no more. My name and reputation, with my companions in the field, and with those under whom I have served, is, I have every cause to believe, fair — may I say it without vanity?—high. This small fortune, and this good reputation, are all that I absolutely have to offer; but, at the same time, I tell you that a much larger fortune, one that would at once

place me on a level, in those respects, with yourself, is withheld from me unjustly, and cannot, I fear, be recovered by law."

"What matters it?" demanded Alice. "What matters it, Langford? My father's consent once given, will not his house, his fortune be our own? What need of more?"

"To you perhaps not, Alice," replied her lover. "But to me it would be painful — it would be the only painful part of my fate to know that a great disparity existed between your fortune and mine; to have any one insinuate that my Alice had married a mere adventurer. In regard, too, to your father's fortune, Alice, I have much hereafter to say to you; I have something even to say to him. But of that we will not speak now. Suffice it that I could bear no great disparity. But, besides," he added, seeing her about to speak, "I have made a solemn promise, Alice, to pursue the recovery of this property, which I mention without pause or hesitation."

"But you said," exclaimed Alice, "that it could not be recovered by law."

"It cannot," replied Langford, "for the

papers by which it could be recovered are with held from me by one, powerful and daring; and I cannot obtain them by any act which the law would justify."

"Then give it up altogether," exclaimed Alice. "Do not, do not, Langford, attempt anything that is not justified by the law."

"But sometimes," replied her lover, "the law is in itself unjust, or else, as in the present instance, is impotent to work redress, and would justify the act if it proved successful. The papers are withheld from me by one, as I have said, powerful and daring. What mandate of the law can make him give them up? while I, by force, if I chose to exert it, might take them for myself; and the possession of them would at once justify the deed by which they were acquired."

"Oh, no, no! do not attempt it, Langford," cried Alice. "Suppose you were to fail in obtaining them, what terrible consequences might ensue! He might resist force by force, blood might be spilt, and the man I love become a murderer."

Langford paused for a moment upon the words, "The man I love," and casting his eyes towards the ground, he fell into a sweet but short reverie. A moment after, however, he returned to the subject, saying, "But my promise, Alice, my promise to the dead?"

"Langford," said Alice gravely, and somewhat sadly; laying her right hand at the same time upon his, in which he had continued to hold her left, and gazing up in his face with a look of tenderness and regard; "Langford, I am no great casuist in such matters; but I have always heard that no promise to do what is unlawful can be binding upon any man. God forbid that I should hold that it is right to do any evil, even to the breaking of the slightest promise; but here, Langford, you are between two evils — the breaking of a promise, and the committing of an unlawful act. The breaking of that promise can do wrong to no one; the keeping it may bring misery on yourself, on me, on all who know you; — may be followed by bloodshed — ay! and the loss of your good name."

"You are eloquent, my Alice," replied Langford, "and I believe that you are right; but still the temptation is so strong, the matter involved is so great and so important, the means of obtaining those papers without force so very doubtful ——"

"Oh, if there be means," exclaimed Alice, "if there be *any* means, employ them. Speak with my father upon it: take counsel with him."

"Alice," replied her lover, "it is impossible. I must not speak with him, I ought not to speak with him, upon this subject. — For his sake, Alice, for yours, I ought not. Alice, forgive me, if I am obliged to use some mystery for the present. That mystery shall soon pass away, and you shall know all."

"I seek not to know it, Langford!" she replied, gazing up in his face; "I am quite satisfied — I am quite sure! Now and for ever my trust is entirely in you. Tell me what you like — conceal from me what you like. I know that I shall never hear of your doing what is wrong; and as for all the rest, I care not."

Langford could not resist such words. He threw his arms round her, and pressed her to his heart. His lips met hers in the first kiss of love, and he set her heart at ease by promising to use none but lawful means to obtain even his right. He still held her gently with one arm thrown lightly round her, and her left hand locked in his, when the sound of a foot-step met his ear, and he looked up. Alice's eyes were raised too, and her cheek turned very red and then very pale, for, at the aperture at the other end of the bowling green, appeared no other than Lord Harold advancing rapidly towards them.

The reader may have remarked that whenever we are interrupted in those seasons when the shy heart comes forth from the depths in which it lies concealed, and suns itself for a moment in the open daylight, the person who breaks in upon us is sure to be the one of all the world before whom we should least like to display the inmost feelings of our bosom. Had it been her father who now approached, Alice would have run up to him, placed her hand in his, hid her

face upon his bosom, and told him all at once. But, both on her own account and on his, Alice would rather have beheld any other person on the earth than Lord Harold at that moment. He could not but have seen the half embrace in which Langford had held her; he could not but know and divine the whole; and Alice felt grieved that such knowledge must come upon him in so painful a manner; while — though not ashamed — she felt abashed and confused, that any one should have been a witness to the first endearment of acknowledged love. Langford's proud nostril expanded, and his head rose high; and drawing the arm of Alice through his own, he advanced with her direct towards Lord Harold, as if about to return to the house. The young nobleman's countenance was deadly pale, and he was evidently much moved, but he behaved well and calmly.

"Your father wishes to speak to you, Alice," he said; "I left him but now, just awake."

Langford saw that Alice could not reply, and he answered, "We are even now about to seek Sir Walter, my Lord."

"I rather imagine that he has business which may require Mistress Alice's private attention," replied Lord Harold, in the same cold tone which both had used; "I have also to request a few moments' conversation with Captain Langford. I will not detain him long."

Alice suddenly raised her eyes, and looked from one to the other. "Langford," she said aloud, "before I leave you, I have one word more to say."

"I will rejoin you here in a moment, my Lord," said Langford calmly. Lord Harold bowed; and Langford, with Alice's arm still resting in his, walked on towards the house. Alice spoke to him, as they went, eagerly, and in a low voice. His reply, as he left her at the door of the manor, was, "On my honour! — Be quite at ease! — Nothing shall induce me."

As soon as he had left her, he returned at once to Lord Harold, whom he found standing, with his arms crossed upon his breast, in an attitude of deep thought.

"Your commands, Sir," said Langford, as soon as they met.

"By your leave, Captain Langford," replied Lord Harold, "we will walk a little farther, where we are not likely to be interrupted."

Langford signified his assent, and they proceeded in silence for some way till they reached a small glade in the park, where Langford paused, saying, "This is surely far enough, Lord Harold, to prevent our being interrupted in any thing you can have to say to me, or I to you."

"Perhaps it may be," replied Lord Harold. "I have a question to ask you, which may perhaps lead to other questions; and I beg you to give me a sincere and open answer, as it may prevent unpleasant consequences to us both."

"If I think fit to give you any answer at all, Lord Harold," replied Langford, "I will give you a sincere one; but I must first know what your question is, before I even consider whether I shall answer it or not."

"The question is simply this," rejoined Lord Harold, in a somewhat bitter tone: "Who and what the gentleman is, who visits this part of the country, introduces himself into our families, and calls himself Captain Langford?"

Langford smiled: "Had I, my Lord," he said, "either visited your property, even as a sportsman, in answer to your Lordship's own invitation, or had I introduced myself into your family, I might have thought myself bound to give some answer to your question; but, as I have done neither the one nor the other, I will beg you to excuse me from replying to it; and I will pardon you for putting it."

"This is all very good, Sir," said Lord Harold, "all very good indeed; but you do not escape me by an affectation of dignity. In the first place, Sir, you cannot suppose that I shall conceal from Sir Walter Herbert what I remarked to-day between yourself and his daughter."

Langford turned very red, but he still replied calmly: "In regard to that, my Lord, you may do as you please. To be a spy upon other people's actions, or a tale-bearer, in regard to a matter accidentally discovered, and not intended for his eye, is certainly a pleasant employment for a gentleman. But all these things depend upon taste; and if Lord Harold's taste lead him

in such a way, Heaven forbid that I should stop him!"

Lord Harold bit his lip: "I shall not be put out of temper, Sir," he replied, "by your sarcasm; and were Captain Langford known to me as a gentleman of honour and character, I should — whatever might be my own personal feelings in this matter — I should be far from betraying a secret which came accidentally to my knowledge; but when Captain Langford is totally unknown in this part of the country, when I have reason to believe that he is not always called by the same name, or seen in the same character, — when, in short, Captain Langford is a very doubtful personage, and I find him introducing himself into the house of my oldest and best friend, and, apparently unknown to that friend, engaging the affections of his daughter, — I feel myself bound in honour to be no party to such a transaction, but to bring the whole matter to light as soon as possible."

Langford had remained standing while the other spoke, in an attitude of attention, and with

his eyes bent down upon the ground. The moment that Lord Harold had done, he raised them, and, with a degree of tranquillity which the young nobleman did not expect, replied, "Perhaps, my Lord, you are in the right. I rather believe, in your situation, I should act in the same manner."

Lord Harold looked both surprised and confused. "This is very extraordinary," he said, "and I cannot but believe that there is some design under it. I must insist, Sir, upon having an explanation on the spot, as to who and what you are — as to what is your title to be in the society in which I find you, and what your claims to the hand of one of the first heiresses in this country."

"Your pardon, my Lord," replied Langford; "you are now going too far. I shall give every explanation that I think fitting to the father of the lady in question; to you I shall give none, till you show me some right which you may have to interfere in the affairs of Mistress Alice Herbert; which, I rather suspect, you cannot do."

Lord Harold again bit his lip; but he replied, almost immediately: "The right I have, Sir, is twofold; that of one of her oldest friends, and that of an applicant for her hand."

For a moment Langford was about to demand, in reply, whether Lord Harold meant an accepted or a rejected suitor; but he was generous, and refrained. "In neither quality," he said, "can I recognise in you any right to interfere; and you will pardon me, if I say, that I will not only give you no explanation whatever on the subject, but will not condescend to hear you speak any further on a matter with which you have no title to meddle."

"Then, Sir," replied Lord Harold, sharply, "nothing remains but to bid you draw your sword. I do you honour in taking it for granted that you are worthy of mine;" and as he spoke, he drew his weapon from the sheath, and, with the point dropped, stood as if in expectation that Langford would follow his example.

Langford remained, however, with his arms crossed upon his chest, and a somewhat melan-

choly smile upon his countenance. "Once more," he said, "you must pardon me, Lord Harold: neither in this matter can I gratify you; not alone because it is a stupid and contemptible habit, only worthy of cowards, or of boys who have no other way of showing their courage, but ——"

"Well said, Master Harry," cried a voice close beside them: "Well said, well said! I think, my little lordling, you had better put up your cold iron, and go your way home to your father To think of a man wishing to bore a hole in his neighbour, like Smith the house-carpenter, with his long gimlet! Let us look at your skewer in a handle, my Lord;" and as he spoke, Silly John, the half-witted man of the village, whom we have before described, advanced, extending his hand to take hold of the blade of Lord Harold's sword.

The young nobleman pushed him sharply aside, however; bidding him begone, with an angry frown.

"Well, I'll be gone," replied the half-witted man; "but I'll be back again in a minute, with

more hands to help me;" and away he ran in the direction of the stream and the village.

"Now, Sir! quick!" exclaimed Lord Harold. "If you would not have me suppose you both a coward and an impostor, draw your sword, and give me satisfaction at once."

"Your Lordship may suppose any thing that you please," replied Langford; "having done nothing that can reasonably dissatisfy you, I shall certainly do nothing to give you any other sort of satisfaction."

"Then, Sir, I shall treat you as you deserve," replied Lord Harold, "and chastise you as a cowardly knave;" and putting up his sword, he advanced to strike his opponent.

But Langford caught his hand in his own powerful grasp, and stopped him, saying, "Hold, Lord Harold, hold! I *will* give you one word of explanation! If, after having heard that, you choose to draw your sword, and seek my life, you shall do so; but remember, as you are a man of honour, to none—no, not to the nearest and dearest, must you reveal the import of these words;" and, drawing him closer to him, he

whispered what seemed to be a single word in the young nobleman's ear. Langford then let go his hold; and, pale as ashes, with a quivering lip and a straining eye, Lord Harold staggered back. His companion turned upon his heel, and walked away; either not hearing, or not choosing to attend to the young nobleman's entreaty to speak with him one word more.

Langford took his way direct to the manor house; but upon entering the door which stood open to the park, he perceived a good deal of bustle and confusion amongst the servants; and on asking if Sir Herbert were in the library, the reply was, "Yes," but it was added, that he and Mistress Alice were both busy with a gentleman, on matters of deep importance. While he was speaking with the servant, Langford, through a door which stood open at the end of a long passage, and afforded a view into the court, perceived Lord Harold come in, with a quick step and a somewhat disordered air, and mounting his horse, which was held by one of Sir Walter's grooms, ride slowly away, without even attempting to enter the house.

"I am about to walk to the village," continued Langford, speaking to the servant. "Will you tell Sir Walter so, when he is visible; for I expect a messenger from London, and may not be back to supper, if I find letters which require an answer?"

He then proceeded through the house, gained the road which led over the bridge, and was proceeding towards the village, in the twilight which was now beginning to fall, when he thought he recognised a form that was advancing towards him, though still at some distance. It proved to be that of the same fair-haired boy, named Jocelyn, whom we have more than once had occasion to mention. He spoke not a word when he came near, but placed a letter in Langford's hands, which the other tore open, and read, though with some difficulty, from the obscurity of the hour.

"There is scarcely time," he said, after he had made out the contents of the epistle, which was very short. "There is scarcely time. Nevertheless, tell him I will be there: but say

also, good Jocelyn, that my resolution is the same as when we last met. I will not try it!"

"I will tell him," was the boy's only reply; and leaving Langford, he ran down the road by the stream, with a rapid pace.

CHAPTER VIII.

The moon had not risen; the sun had gone down; the sky, which for near a month had been as calm and serene as a good mind, was covered over with long lines of dark grey cloud, heavy, and near the earth; when a solitary horseman took his station under a broad old tree upon the wide waste, called Uppington Moor, and gazed forth as well as the growing darkness would let him. It was a dim and sombre scene, unsatisfactory to the eye, but exciting to the imagination. Every thing was vague and undefined in the shadows of that hour, and the long streaks of deeper and fainter brown which varied the surface of the moor, spoke merely of undulations in the ground, marking the great extent of the plain towards the horizon. A tall solitary mournful tree might be seen here and there, adding to the feeling of vastness and solitude; and about the

middle of the moor, as one looked towards the west, was a small detached grove, or rather clump of large beeches, presenting a black irregular mass, at the side of which the lingering gleam of the north-western sky was reflected in some silvery lines upon what seemed a considerable piece of water. That was the only light which the landscape contained, and it would have cut harsh with the gloomy and ominous view around, had not a thin mist, rising over the whole, softened the features of the scene, and left them still more indistinct and melancholy.

It was an hour and a place fit for sad thoughts and dark forebodings, and the horseman sat upon his tall powerful gelding in the attitude of one full of meditation. He had suffered the bridle to drop, his head was slightly bent forward, and his eye strained upon the scene before him; while his mind seemed to drink in from its solemn and cheerless aspect feelings as dark and dismal as itself. He sat there about a quarter of an hour, and not a sound had been heard upon the moor but the deep sort of sobbing creaking of a neighbouring

marsh, or the shrill cry of some bird of night as it skimmed by with downy and noiseless wings. There was not a breath of air stirring; there was no change took place in the aspect of the sky or the earth: it was as if nature were dead, and the feeling seemed to become oppressive, for the horseman at length gently touched his beast with his heel, and made him move slowly out from under the branches of the tree.

Scarcely had he done so, however, when the distant sound of a horse's feet was heard, as if coming at a very tardy and heavy pace from the west. The sound, indeed would not have been perceptible at that distance, but for the excessive stillness of all around, and the eagerness with which the traveller listened. His eye was now bent anxiously, too, upon the western gleam in the water, and in a few minutes the dark figure of another man on horseback was seen against the brighter background thus afforded, riding slowly on, as the road he followed wound round the mere.

It was like a scene in a phantasmagoria, and in a moment after two more figures were

added, and all three suddenly stopped. None of the minute parts of their proceedings were visible, and it was impossible, at that distance, to discern how they were occupied; but a moment after there seemed a sudden degree of agitation in the group, then came a bright flash, followed at a considerable interval by the report of a pistol, and immediately after all three horsemen disappeared.

"What may this mean?" said the stranger aloud. "I fear there is mischief." The sound of his voice seemed strange in the midst of this solitude, but he had scarcely spoken when the stillness was again broken by the noise of a horse's feet; but this time it came from another direction, not exactly opposite, but much to the right hand of the spot whence the former sounds had proceeded, and the beast was evidently galloping as fast as he could over turf. It came nearer and nearer, and the watcher went back under the tree.

At length, another powerful cavalier became visible, approaching at full speed; and as he drew nigh he looked round more than once, and

pulled up his horse suddenly by the tree. "Are you there?" he said in a low voice; and the next moment the other came forth and joined him.

"Quick! quick! master Harry;" continued the one who had joined him: "Put your horse into a gallop, and come on with all speed."

"But I told you, Franklin," replied the other, holding back, "I told you that I would have nothing to do with it! What I saw a month ago under the park wall was quite sufficient; and I would have no hand in such a business were it to put a crown upon my head."

"Foolish boy! the business is done without you to a certain point," replied his companion. "I have served you whether you would or not; and I suppose, of course, you will be ungrateful. Come on with me, and you shall have the key of the chest, which I have ventured my neck to get for you. You have nothing to do but to walk in and take what is your own. But come on! come on quick! You would not have me taken, I suppose; and I have reason to think I am followed."

Thus saying, he put his horse again into a

gallop, and Langford followed at the same pace. Two or three times, as they rode on, Franklin Gray looked back over the moor; but no moving object of any kind was to be seen, except one of those creeping phosphoric lights which linger on the edges of an old marsh; no sound of any kind was to be heard, but the measured beating of their horses' feet upon the hollow-sounding turf.

At length, when they had gone about two miles further, Franklin Gray checked his horse's speed, saying, "There is no one following now — yet they made the signal from the hill! Did you not hear a pistol shot just before I came up?"

"Yes," replied Langford; "I heard it distinctly, and saw the flash. Was that as a signal that some one was following you?"

"It was," answered Gray. "But how you could see the flash I don't understand, for they were down below the brow of the hill, where one can see both roads to the castle."

"Oh no!" said Langford. "The men who fired that shot were upon the moor close

by Upwater Mere, and I very much fear, Gray, that some of these accursed evil companions of yours, have been again committing an act that you neither knew of nor desired."

"If they have," exclaimed Gray with a horrid imprecation, "I will shoot the first of them, were he my own brother."

"How many were there of them on the watch?" demanded Langford.

"Two," replied his companion.

"Then I will tell you what I saw," answered Langford. "As I sat on my horse and looked out over the mere which just caught a gleam from the sky, the figure of a horseman crossed the light, as if he were going to the castle. Just at that minute two more came out upon him — from amongst the beeches, it seemed to me; then came the pistol shot; and a minute after they all disappeared."

Gray gave utterance to another terrible oath; and then, after thinking a few minutes, he added, "But it can't be any of my people! They dared not, after the warning I gave them about that bad business under the park fence."

"At all events," cried Langford, reining up his horse entirely, "had we not better go back and see? I fear very much, Franklin, that they have shot the man, whoever he is."

"No, no," replied Franklin; "if they have shot him, he is shot, and there is no need of our meddling with the matter."

"But he may be merely wounded," replied Langford; "we had better go back."

"No!" thundered Franklin Gray, "I tell you no! It is mere madness! We are but half a mile from the house: when I have got there, we shall learn who has done this, and I will send out and see if there is any one hurt. Come on, come on!"

Langford followed his bidding, and renewing their quick pace, they rode on for about half a mile farther, till, amid a clump of tall trees, at the very edge of the moor, where some poor thin unproductive fields connected it with the cultivated country, they perceived a light shining from a small window in a tall building before them.

At that period there still remained scattered

over the face of England, a number of those edifices which, fortified to a certain degree, combined the modern house with the ancient feudal hold, and had been rendered very serviceable to both parties in the progress of the great rebellion. These fortified houses were of every size, from that which really well merited the name of castle, to that which was no more than a mere tower; and many of them, either from being injured by the chances of war, or from having lost a great part of their utility when the scourge of civil contention was removed from the country, had gone completely to decay, or had been applied to the calmer and more homely uses of the barn, the grange, or the farmhouse.

Such was the house which Langford and his companion now approached; and, as far as the darkness of the hour suffered its outline to appear, it seemed to the former to be a tall heavy tower of stonework, with four small windows on the side next to them. Beneath its protection, and attached to it on one side, with the gable end turned towards the road, was a lower

building with a high peaked roof of slates; and, close by, another mass of masonry, apparently the ruins of a church or chapel. The light that the horseman had seen, came from one of the upper windows of the tower; but there were lights also in the less elevated building by its side. A low wall stood before the whole, enclosing a little neglected garden; and through a gate which stood open in this wall, Franklin Gray led his companion in, and up to the door of the tower. There, beside the door, stood the ancient steps, which many a burly cavalier in the Hudibrastic days, and in days long before that, had employed to mount his horse's back; and there too, on either side of the entrance, was many a ring, staple, and hook, for the purpose of fastening up the troopers' horses, while their masters rested or caroused in the hall hard by.

Having attached their bridles to two of these hooks, Franklin Gray and his companion proceeded to seek admission into the tower. To gain this, Gray first struck the door three or four times distinctly with his heavy hand. The

moment he had done so, a light step was heard running along within, and after manifold bolts and bars had been withdrawn, the boy Jocelyn threw open the door; and Langford followed his companion into a low narrow entrance hall, on the right of which was another door, and at the end a dim flight of stone steps leading apparently to the upper apartments.

Scarcely, however, had the foot of Franklin Gray fallen three times on that stone passage, when a light came gleaming down the stairs; and the next instant, the flutter of a woman's garments was seen, as she descended with a step of joy. She was as lovely a creature as the eye of man ever rested upon, though the first years of youthful grace were passed, and though the sun of a warmer land than this had dyed her skin with a rich brown. Her eyes — her large full liquid eyes — were as black as jet, and the long dark fringe that edged both the upper and the under lid, left but little of the white visible. The glossy black hair, divided on the forehead, was tied in a large massy knot behind, without any ornament whatsoever; but

along the whole line might be traced a strong undulation, which told that, if free, it would have fallen in ringlets round her face; and even as it was, two or three thick curls escaped from the knot behind, and hung in glossy masses on her neck. Her age might be three or four and twenty, and her form had the fulness of that age; but without having lost any of the symmetry of youth.

She carried a lamp in her hand; and the light of it showed her dark eyes sparkling with joy as they rested upon Franklin Gray. Setting down the light upon the stairs, she darted forward at once, and cast herself upon his bosom, exclaiming with a strong foreign accent, "You have come back! you have come back! Oh, I have been so uneasy about you!"

"But why, my Mona?" demanded Franklin Gray, with his whole tone and manner changed to one of the utmost gentleness, as soon as he addressed her. "Why more to night than at other times, when I am obliged to leave you?"

"Oh, I do not well know," she replied; "but you kissed me twice before you went;

and then you came back to kiss me once more, and bid me remember you; and I felt sure you were going on some dangerous expedition. I felt sad at heart myself, too, as if some evil would come of this night."

"Evil has come of it, I fear," replied Franklin Gray; but he then added quickly, seeing her turn pale at his words, "Evil not upon me or of my doing, Mona. But go up again, beloved! go up again! and I will come to you directly. You see I have some one with me."

She turned her eyes upon Langford, whom she did not seem to have noticed before; and then bowing her head gracefully and slowly, she raised the lamp again, and disappeared up the steps.

When she was gone, Franklin Gray turned round and gazed upon Langford for a moment, with a proud yet melancholy smile. There was a world of meaning in his look, and Langford could only reply to it by exclaiming with a glance still more sorrowful, "Oh, Gray, this is very sad!"

" Come come," cried his companion, " it shall be amended some day, Harry. Come, Jocelyn," he continued, turning to the boy, " tell me, master page, who are in the hall, and how many?"

The boy's brow became grave at the question. " There are but three, sir," he replied; " there is James of Coventry, and there is Doveton and little Harvey."

" Indeed," said Gray, shutting his teeth close, as if to keep down angry feelings that were rising fast; " indeed:" and he threw open the door, with his right hand, which led into a small dark room. That again he strode across, giving Langford a sign to follow, and then opened another door which admitted them into a much larger chamber, well lighted, in the midst of which was a large table furnished with a flagon and some drinking cups. At the farther end sat two men playing with dice, while a third, a short smart-looking personage, was standing behind, observing their game. They ceased when Franklin Gray and his companion appeared; and the merriment which

they evidently had been enjoying, was over in a moment.

"But you three left!" said Gray as he entered, "but you three left! Where are Hardcastle and Wiley?"

"They went out shortly after you, Captain Gray," replied one of the men who were playing; "I can't tell where they are."

"Doveton," replied Gray, in a calm grave tone, "you are a gentleman and a soldier; so are you, James; and Master Harvey too, though he did not serve with us either in Germany, or in the New World, has had the honour of serving in Ireland, and is a man of honour. Now, I ask you all, straightforwardly, where are these two men gone to? Marcham and Henry of the Hill I took with me; all the others I know about also; but where are Wiley and Hardcastle, and what are they about?"

"Why, really, sir," replied the man called Doveton, "we can only tell by guess; for since that business down in the green lane, they have kept very much by themselves, and

don't seem to deal fairly with us, especially Wiley."

"I 'll tell you what, Captain," said the man who was standing behind, and whom they called amongst themselves Little Harvey, "I wish Wiley was out amongst us; he will get us all into mischief some day. He does not do things in a gentlemanlike way. I guess what he is gone after; but he has not succeeded I see." And as he spoke, he gave a significant glance towards Langford, as if he were in some degree connected with the matter in question.

"Indeed!" said Gray; "I suspect your meaning, Harvey; but let us hear more plainly what you think. Though I direct and guide, and am always willing to take the greatest dangers on myself; still we are comrades, and should treat each other as such. What is it you think, Harvey?"

"I won't say what I think," replied the man; "but I'll say what I saw. When you sent the boy Jocelyn down to the manor, Wiley cross-questioned him both before he went and when

he came back; and when he heard him give you a message about a gentleman meeting you on the moor, he whispered a good deal to Hardcastle, who came up and asked me if I would go along with them upon an enterprise which must be quite secret, and which must be done without your knowing it. I refused; and told him, I thought that after the business down in the lane, he had better not let Wiley lead him; but to that he answered, that this was a matter which could not fail as the other had done, and that it would be over in five minutes. I said I would not go, however; and they went without me."

"Hark, they are coming!" said Gray, as the sound of horses' feet was heard stopping opposite the house. "Let them in the back way, Jocelyn; and bring in supper. Here! Come with me, Master Harry." And he led the way back into the hall by which they had at first entered, and in which there still remained the lamp that the boy Jocelyn had carried when he gave them admittance. Gray carefully shut the doors behind him: and wher

he stood alone in the passage with Langford, he unbuttoned his vest, and took from an inner pocket a key of a very peculiar and extraordinary form.

"There is the key, Master Harry," he said, speaking quickly, and with strong passions of some kind evidently struggling in his breast. "Your own fate is now in your own power! Manage it as you will!"

"But tell me how this has been obtained," said Langford.

"I have no time for long stories," replied his companion sharply. "There it is! that is sufficient. But I will tell you so far, I—I alone—though directed by one who knew the house well, walked through it this night from one end to the other; and within six yards of the old man himself, with nothing but a door between us, took this key from the hiding place where he thought it so safe, and brought it away undiscovered.—Now, Harry, leave me! I am not in a humour to speak much. I have matters before me that may well make me silent. Mount your horse, and be gone with all speed.

—Why do you linger?—Oh! I will send out ere ten minutes be over; and, if there be a possibility of undoing what has been done amiss, it shall be undone, on my honour. Take the back road," he added, as he opened the door for Langford; "take the back road; and for worlds go no more upon the moor to-night!—I ask you for my own sake," he added, seeing his companion hesitate; "not for yours, but for mine!"

Langford made no reply, but mounting his horse, rode away with feelings of a nature the most mingled and the most painful.

Those of the man he left behind were of a different character, but still terrible. With Langford, there were feelings which he seldom experienced, doubt and hesitation as to his own course of action, mingling with vague apprehensions of evil, and deep regret to see a man possessed of many noble qualities, who had been his friend, his companion, and even his protector in the early days of youth, now plunged into a current, terrible in itself, and terrible in its consequences,—following a course which he had long

suspected that Gray did really follow, but without having conviction forced upon him, till that night.

With Franklin Gray it was very different; his whole feelings, for the time, were swallowed up in one stern and gloomy resolution.

There was anger, indeed, at the bottom of that resolution; wrath of the most bitter and deadly kind; but even that was almost lost in the effort to exclude from his thoughts every thing that might shake, even in the least degree, the dark and terrible determination he had formed.

As soon as Langford had quitted him he returned to the hall, in which he had left his comrades; and there, as he expected, he found the party increased by the presence of the two men, Wiley and Hardcastle, whose names we have mentioned more than once, and whom we have seen busy in the attack upon Alice Herbert.

It was evident that some conversation had passed between them and the others, regarding the indignation which they had excited in their leader, and while, in the rough counte-

nance of Hardcastle, might be traced a great deal of shame and apprehension, in the more cunning face of Wiley appeared a degree of hesitating uncertainty, mingling strangely with dogged defiance, and making him look like an ill-tempered hound, about to receive the lash, but not very sure whether to lie down and howl, or fly at the throat of the huntsman. The boy Jocelyn was busily bringing in some dishes, and setting them on the table; but he glanced at Franklin Gray from time to time, seeming to know better than any one present the character of the man with whom they had to deal, and to divine what was likely to be the issue.

Franklin Gray said not a word in regard to the matter which was in all their thoughts; but, sitting down at the head of the table, he made some observations upon the bread, which was not good; and then added, speaking to the others, "Begin, begin! Marcham and Henry of the Hill won't be long."

"I heard them coming over the hill but now," said the boy Jocelyn.

Gray made no reply, and the rest began their meal in silence; but he ate nothing, looking curiously at the knife in his hand, as if there was something very interesting in the blade. He made the boy give him a silver cup, indeed, full of wine from the tankard; and, as he was drinking it, the two others, whom he had mentioned, came in laughing, and seemed surprised to see the grave and stern manner in which the supper was passing.

The matter was soon explained, however; for no sooner had they sat down in the places left for them, than Franklin Gray fixed his eyes upon Wiley, and said, "Now, my masters Wiley and Hardcastle, we are all present but two: be so good as to tell me where you have been to-night?"

The time which had elapsed, the indifference, and even carelessness, which had hitherto appeared in Gray's manner, and a cup or two of wine which he himself had drunk, had removed the degree of apprehension which at first mingled with the sullen determination of Wiley; and he replied at once, with a look of effrontery,

"I don't think that at all necessary, Captain! I rather believe that I have as much right to ride my horse over any common in the kingdom as you have, without giving you any account of it either."

"You hear," said Franklin Gray, looking round calmly to the rest, "you hear!"

"Come, come, Master Wiley," cried the man called Doveton, "that won't do, after what we all swore, when we came down here. Come, Hardcastle, you are the best of the two; come, you tell Captain Gray at once what you have been about. We must know, if it be but for our own safety."

"Oh! I'll tell at once," said Hardcastle. "Devilish sorry am I that I ever went; and I certainly would not have gone had I known how it would turn out. I'll never go again with Wiley as long as I live: I told him so, as we came over the common."

Wiley muttered something not very laudatory of his companion; but it was drowned in the stern voice of Franklin Gray, who exclaimed, "Go on, Hardcastle!"

"Why, we went out to the beeches by Upwater Meer," replied Hardcastle; "and we had not been there long, when up came some one on horseback, going along slowly towards the castle. It was not the person we were looking for, however ——"

"Pray, who were you looking for?" interrupted Franklin Gray.

"Why, I think that is scarcely fair, Captain," said Hardcastle.

"It matters not," replied Gray; "I know without your telling me. Go on!"

"Well, as the young man came up," continued the other "Wiley said we might as well have what he had upon him. So we rode up, and asked him to stop, quite civilly; but, instead of doing so, he drew his sword, and spurred on his horse upon Wiley, and ——"

"Well," exclaimed Gray impatiently, "what then? — I heard the pistol fired," he said, seeing the man hesitate, "so tell the truth."

"Well," said Hardcastle, "well;" and as he spoke he turned somewhat pale: "well, then Wiley fired, you know, and brought him down;

and we pulled him under the beeches, and took what we could get. We have not divided it yet, but it seems a good sum."

As his companion had been detailing the particulars of their crime, the changes which had come over Wiley's countenance were strange and fearful. He had watched with eager anxiety the countenance of Franklin Gray, who sat nearly opposite to him at the other end of the table; but, being able to gather nothing from those stern dark features, he ran his eye rapidly round the faces of the rest, and after several changes of expression, resumed, as well as he could, the look of cunning and daring impudence which he had at first put on. The entrance of the boy Jocelyn with some plates just behind him, however, made him give a sharp start and look round. Franklin Gray fixed his eyes upon the boy, and waved his hand; and Jocelyn immediately went round to the other side of the table.

"Hardcastle," said their leader, "I shall find some means of punishing you. As for you, Wiley ——"

"You shall not punish me, Captain Gray!" interrupted Wiley, knitting his brows and speaking through his teeth; "you shall not punish me! for by ——, if you don't mind what you are about, I'll hang you all."

Franklin Gray sat and heard him calmly, keeping his eyes fixed upon him with stern unchanging gaze till he had done speaking. He then looked round once more, saying, "You hear!" and, at the same moment, he at once drew a pistol from under his coat. Every face around turned pale but his own; and Wiley started up from the table. But before he could take a single step, and while yet, with agony of approaching fate upon him, he gazed irresolute in the face of his leader, the unerring hand of Franklin Gray had levelled the pistol and fired.

The ball went right through his head; the unhappy man bounded up two or three feet from the ground, and then fell dead at the end of the table. Franklin Gray sat perfectly still, gazing through the smoke for about a minute; and through the whole hall reigned an awful silence.

He then laid the pistol calmly down on the table before him, and drew forth a second.

Hardcastle crossed his arms upon his breast, and looked him full in the face, saying, "Well, Captain, I am ready."

"You mistake me," said Gray, laying down the pistol on the table with the muzzle turned towards himself. "My friends, if I have done wrong by the shot I have fired, any of you that so pleases, has but to take up that pistol and use it as boldly as I have done its fellow. — What say you, am I right or wrong?"

"Right, right!" replied every voice.

"Well, then," said Gray, putting up the weapons again, "some of you take him down; and you, Doveton and Marcham, hark ye;" and he spoke a few words to them apart. "Take Hardcastle with you," he added; "that shall be his punishment!" so saying, he turned, took up a lamp that stood near, and quitted the hall.

Franklin Gray mounted the steps in the tower that we have mentioned, slowly and sadly, paused halfway up, and fell into deep thought. His reverie lasted but a minute: he then proceeded,

and reached the room where the fair being whom he called Mona was watching anxiously for his coming. Her eyes questioned him; but he made no reply in words. He threw his right arm round her, however, and rested his face upon her bosom for several minutes with his eyes shut; then pressed her to his heart, kissed her cheek, and said, "Come, my Mona! come and see our babe sleeping."

CHAPTER IX.

For nearly three miles Langford rode rapidly on. His mind was in that state of confusion and uncertainty which admitted not of any slow movement of the body; but as he thought again and again of all that had occurred, he the more deeply regretted that he had ever gone to the rendezvous with Franklin Gray, although his purpose in there going was to separate his own proceedings for ever from those of one whose present pursuits could be no longer doubtful. When Langford had known him in former years he was a wild and reckless soldier of fortune, whose bold rash spirit had prevented rather than aided him in rising to those high grades in the service which his talents might otherwise have obtained. His heart had ever, as far as Langford had seen it, been kind, noble and generous; there were many circumstances which

had connected them closely in our hero's early life; and in himself and his fate, Franklin Gray had ever taken a deep and affectionate interest.

His hatred of inactivity, his love of enterprise, his daring courage, his strong and determined resolution, his rapid powers of combination, and that peculiar talent for command which is a gift rather than an acquirement, had made him loved and admired by the soldiery under him, and might have gone far to constitute one of the greatest generals of the age. But by his fellow officers he had never been loved, and by those above him he had constantly been used, but had never been trusted or liked. In truth there was a fierce and overbearing spirit in his bosom, a contempt for other men's opinions, and an abhorrence of the ordinary littlenesses of human nature, which prevented him from seeking or winning the regard of any one, towards whom some peculiar circumstance, or some extraordinary powers had not excited in his bosom feelings either of tenderness or of respect; and for this reason he had never been

loved. Why he had never been trusted was another matter. He had set out in life depending more upon feeling than upon principle as his guide; and though, as he went on, he had framed for his own bosom a sort of code of laws by which he was strictly bound, those laws did not always very well accord with the ordinary code of mankind, and if generally acted upon must have been disastrous to society. Those who disliked him — very often for his superiority to themselves — were glad to find in his failings a specious excuse for undervaluing his better qualities, and thus he had been always thwarted and bitterly disappointed in his progress in life.

Brought up as a soldier from his earliest years, he had ever looked upon strife as his profession, life as one great campaign, the world as a battle-field, mankind either enemies, or fellow soldiers. The great law that he had laid down for himself was, never to measure himself against any but those who were equal to the strife, and he would just as soon have thought of injuring the weak, the innocent, or the defenceless, as he would

of murdering the wounded in an hospital. The proud, the haughty, and the strong he took a pleasure in humbling or overthrowing, even when bound to the same cause with himself, and the constant single combats in which he was engaged had raised him up a bad name in the service.

In other respects, though no one could ever accuse Gray of injuring the peasant, or taking away a part of the honest earnings of the farmer, though, even under the orders of his general, he would take no part in raising contributions from the hard-working and industrious, and it was in vain to send him upon such expeditions, yet there had been many a tale current in the camp, of Gray and his troopers sacking and burning the castles in the Palatinate, driving the cattle from under the very guns of the enemy's fortresses, and sweeping the wealth from the palace of the Prince or the Bishop. Thus he had established in some degree the character of a daring, but somewhat maurauding, officer, and any soldier of more than ordinary enterprise and rashness ever sought to be enrolled in his

troop. He had quitted the service of France in disgust some time before Langford, and they had not met again till Langford, called suddenly to the death-bed of a parent, found Gray, who had known her and hers in happier days, tending her with the care and kindness of a son.

Of what had taken place in the interim, Langford was ignorant. From time to time, Gray talked of other lands which he had visited, and more burning climates which he had known; but he did so in a vague and obscure manner, which excited curiosity without inviting inquiry. Langford had made none; and though they had met frequently since, and dark suspicions and apprehensions — springing from a comparison of Gray's former poverty and his known prodigality with the wealth he seemed now to have at command — had from time to time crossed his friend's mind in regard to the pursuits to which he had dedicated himself, it was only on the occasion of the present visit to Moorhurst, that Langford had obtained a positive certainty of the painful truth. As soon as he had obtained that certainty, he

determined to warn, to exhort, to beseech his former friend to quit the dangerous pursuits in which he was engaged, to offer once more to share with him all his little wealth, in gratitude for many an act of kindness gone before, and for a service that Gray was even then anxious to do him, at the risk of life itself; but on no account whatsoever to participate in any scheme conducted by the other, however great and important the object to be gained for himself.

His own wound, and the temporary disappearance of Gray and his companions from that part of the country, had prevented Langford from notifying to him this intention fully, after the night of the attack upon Alice Herbert, though he had done so in general terms twice before, and he had gone to the rendezvous appointed by Gray, on the night of which we have just been speaking, supposing that it was to have preceded, not to have followed, the enterprise proposed. All that he had seen had been terribly painful to him; and, in what had occurred upon the moor, he had too good reason to believe that an act had been committed which he should not be justified in concealing. Yet,

how was he to reveal it, without the basest breach of confidence, and the grossest ingratitude towards a man who had been risking all to serve him? How was he to denounce the crime that had been committed, and bring to justice the perpetrators thereof, without involving Gray in the same destruction?

Such were the matters in his thoughts, as he rode rapidly on towards the manor house; but, by the time he had gone about three miles, his mind had been naturally led to inquire, who was the unfortunate person that had been attacked; and, for the first time, an apprehension crossed his mind that it might be Lord Harold.

"And yet," thought Langford, as he rode along, "he would never go over the moor at that time of night, and alone. He must have been home long before, too: nevertheless, he set out very slowly; and he seemed to turn to the right, as if he were going by the moor. He may have loitered by the way, or visited some cottage, or called at some house. Good God! this uncertainty is not to be borne. I must, and will go back to the moor."

As he thus thought, he turned his horse short round, and galloped back as fast as possible, following the road which led to the piece of water called Upwater Meer. By the time he reached it, the moon was just rising, and spreading through the hazy sky, near the horizon, a red and ominous glare. It served to cast some light upon the road, however; and Langford, calculating with the keen accuracy of a soldier, had fixed exactly upon the spot before he reached it, where he had seen the unfortunate traveller encountered by his two assailants.

When he did reach that spot, the deep gory stains in the sandy road but too plainly showed him he was right; and he traced the course of the murderers along by the thick drops of gore, till the track was lost in the grass beneath the beech trees. The darkness which reigned under their branches rendered all farther search fruitless; and, after having given up nearly half an hour to the painful, but unsuccessful task, he once more mounted his horse, and, with feelings of deep

gloom and despondency, took his way back towards the manor house.

It was nearly eleven o'clock at night ere Langford reached the gates; and the family generally retired to rest before that hour.

Certain doubts and apprehensions, however, in regard to the affairs of Sir Walter Herbert — doubts and apprehensions springing from a thousand minute incidents, which he had noticed while staying as a visiter in the house — had induced him to inquire farther, from sources whence he might derive certain information; and the information he had thus acquired made nim now determine to return to the manor that night, rather than go to the inn, though the hour was somewhat unseasonable.

He found all the servants up; and there was a look of anxiety and apprehension in the countenances of all, which led him to believe that his fears were not unfounded, and that the business in which Sir Walter had been engaged during the evening was both painful in itself, and such as could no longer be concealed from his household.

In those days, when difficulties and embarrassments overtook a country gentleman, the case was much more painful than it is at present. Habits of luxury and dissipation, ostentatious rivalry with one another, and many of the other vices which, in the present times, have rendered the transfer of property from the old gentry of the land but too common, and burthens upon that which does remain very general, had then scarcely reached the country; and though the dissipated inhabitants of towns, the gay debauched peer, the fopling of the court, and the speculating merchant, might know, from time to time, every reverse of fortune, it seldom occurred in those days that the old proprietor of lands in the country experienced any great and detrimental change, unless tempted to quit the calm enjoyments of rural life for the more dangerous pleasures of the town.

Civil wars, indeed, and political strife had brought about, or laid the foundation for, the ruin of a great number of the country gentry; and such, in some degree, had been the case

with Sir Walter Herbert. His father had served king Charles both with sword and purse, and had never received either payment or recompence. The matter had gone on slowly since, drop by drop, till the cup was nearly full.

Sir Walter had shut his eyes to the fact, and had carefully concealed a situation, the whole extent of which he did not himself know, and which he always hoped to remedy, from the eyes of those around him. It could not be, however, but that reports of embarrassment should get abroad; and it was well known in the country that, some five or six years before, he had become security to the amount of ten thousand pounds for a neighbouring gentleman, who failed to pay the debt, fled, and left the country. But every one knew, also, that the bond was in the hands of Lord Danemore, Sir Walter's acquaintance and neighbour: and every one, when the subject was mentioned, smiled, and declared that Lord Harold, the son of the peer, and Mistress Alice Herbert, would find means of cancelling the debt.

We have already had occasion to show that such expectations were vain: and the reports of embarrassments which had reached Langford's ears, from sources which he could not doubt, had rendered his suit to Alice Herbert as disinterested as it could be; but had prepared his mind for what he was about to hear.

"I am afraid something is the matter, Haliday," he said, addressing the servant who gave him admittance: "What has happened, do you know?"

"I am afraid something has gone wrong too, Captain," replied the servant, with a sorrowful expression of countenance; "but Mistress Alice, I dare say, will tell you all about it. She is sitting up in the library to see you; and begged you would come to her whenever you came in."

Langford waited for no one to usher him to her presence; but by two or three rapid steps passed the servant, and opened the library door.

Alice was sitting at a table with a book before her. It were vain to say that she

was reading; for though her eyes had more than once fixed upon the pages, and had scanned several sentences, so as to make out the words, of the meaning of those words her mind was very little conscious. Her eyes were now tearless; but it was clear to Langford that she had been weeping not long before. The noise of his foot made her instantly rise, and the colour became a good deal deeper in her cheek; betraying a part, but a very small part, of the varied emotions that were going on within.

The heart of her lover was throbbing at that moment with many an anxiety, it is true; but, strange as it may seem, love and noble pride, ay, and even joy, engrossed by far the greater part. He guessed — no, he divined all that she felt, however; the pain, the care, the apprehensiveness, that burdened her breast, as she rose after waiting there alone to receive him in order to tell him the tale of her father's embarrassments; a tale which he well knew she had never herself heard before that night.

Langford would not have paused a mo-

ment under such circumstances for worlds; and, with a step as quick as lightning, he was by her side. He took her hand in his. He made her sit down again, and drew a chair near her; gazing upon her with a look so full of tenderness and affection, that — though sweet, most sweet to all her feelings — it made the tears again rise into her eyes. It matters not whether what we drop into a full cup be earth or a jewel; the cup overflows with either. Langford was anxious to speak first himself, and was not sorry that any emotion, not painful in itself, should prevent her from commencing the conversation.

"Alice," he said, "dear Alice, something painful has happened, I know, — and I guess the nature of it; but do not let it affect you too deeply. If you did but know how common these events are in the gay world of the metropolis, it would become lighter in your eyes than it is now, breaking upon you suddenly, and ignorant of all such transactions."

"Then you have heard?" said Alice, gazing mournfully in his face.

"No, I have not," replied Langford; "but I have divined what is the matter—I divined long ago."

"Then you were indeed generous," she said, "to wish to link your fate with mine; for it seems to be an evil one."

"Not so, dearest," replied Langford; "not so! I would say, that all I ask is to share it, if I had not the vain hope, my beloved, of doing more, and rendering it a happy one."

"Oh! but Langford, I fear you do not know all," replied Alice; "and though I waited here on purpose to tell you, I do not know whether I shall be able to do so distinctly; for I am unacquainted with even the terms of these things. But I will tell you what happened when I came home. I found my poor father sitting here, in a terrible state of agitation, and Lord Danemore's lawyer with him, looking cold and stiff, and taking snuff, and a very different man indeed from what I have seen him in former days, bowing down to the ground, and scarcely venturing to sit down in the same room with my father. He

it was that told me, for my father could not, that there was what he called a bond and judgment for ten thousand pounds and interest, which my father owed Lord Danemore; and that my father had offered to give him a mortgage on his estate for it; but that Lord Danemore would not take one, both because he wanted the money, and because he said that the estate was mortgaged already up to its value."

"That must be a mistake, I think," said Langford. "You will forgive me, Alice, for having made some inquiries lately; and will not, I know, attribute my having done so to any motive but the true one. I have, however, made such inquiries; and I feel sure that this lawyer of Lord Danemore's has greatly exaggerated, and has done so for the purpose of embarrassing your father."

"Oh! I cannot think he could be so cruel," exclaimed Alice, "when he saw the dreadful state of agitation in which my father was. However, he made it out, in short, that we had nothing on earth left but the pictures and

the plate, and my poor mother's jewels; and he said, that all he wanted to know was, first, whether I would be willing to give up the little fortune that was left me by my aunt, to pay one half of the debt; and next, when my father would pay the remainder. He said, too, he had no objection to give my father a week to do so."

"A week!" exclaimed Langford, "a week! The pitiful scoundrel! Is that the way he treats his master's friend? However, Alice, he shall find himself mistaken! Listen to me, my beloved," and clasping her hand in his, he glided his other arm round her waist, and gazed fondly and tenderly in her face: "I have some means of knowing, Alice, what is taking place in this neighbourhood, which it is needless to explain; and certain circumstances induced me to believe that this claim would be made by Lord Danemore on your father immediately.—Alice," he added, with a meaning look, "you know that there may be motives sufficient to induce Lord Danemore to entertain some slight angry feelings towards you and your father, at this moment."

Alice blushed very deeply, and looked up with surprise, saying, "What motives do you mean, Langford?"

"I mean on account of his son," replied Langford.

"I did not know," replied Alice ingenuously, "that either you or any body else, but my father, knew aught of that business, till to-night."

"Several persons knew it," replied Langford; "and though I do not mean to excuse Lord Danemore, yet we must allow something for anger — and I think that such was his motive."

"Oh, that it certainly was," replied Alice, "for the attorney did not scruple to acknowledge it; but I did not think myself justified in mentioning it even to you, Langford."

"I do not mean to excuse Lord Danemore's conduct," said Langford. "It was unjust and unkind; but perhaps it was consistent with human nature, and certainly was consistent with all I know of his nature, which is quick, vehement, and passionate, if we may believe one half of what is said. But, after all, very likely this lawyer has outdone his instructions. However, Alice, as I

said, he shall be disappointed. Learning that something of the kind was in agitation, I wrote several days ago to London, in order to be prepared to meet this matter. By this time my messenger is at the village, and brings with him a sufficient sum to discharge your father's obligation to Lord Danemore. For the last two or three days, Alice, I will acknowledge to you that my mind has been in a great state of doubt and agitation: the sum for which I have sent is more than one half of what I actually possess; but it was no fear in regard to that which made me at all hesitate. I only doubted whether I should tell you all I feel towards you, before I offered this little assistance to your father or not. I thought, that if hope had deceived me, and Alice rejected my love, her father would then refuse to receive any aid from me, however needful it might be to him; and, therefore, on the one hand I fancied it might be better to mention the subject of the money first. But then again, on the other hand, I thought, if I did so, it might place my Alice in embarrassing circumstances, should she find herself obliged to

to refuse a man who had come to her father's assistance in a moment of difficulty. I judged it would seem ungenerous of me, even to ask her, very soon after. — In short, Alice, I gave way to hope and impatience, trusting that my Alice, by accepting me, would give me a right both to protect her and to assist her father."

"In short, Langford," replied Alice, placing her other hand upon his, "in short, you thought of every thing that was generous, and kind, and noble, and acted accordingly."

"Nay, nay, not so, Alice," replied Langford; "but, of course, you have told your father what has passed between us."

"Immediately that man was gone," replied Alice, "I felt myself bound to do so, Langford — the more bound from all the distressing and agitating events which had occurred."

"You did quite right, my beloved," he replied. "What did he say?"

"He said every thing that was kind and affectionate," replied Alice. "He said every thing that I should like to hear said of one I love; but he said that he feared you would be disappointed when you heard all this bad news,

and that I was bound in honour to set you free from all promises as much as if no proposal had ever been made. On his own part, he said, that he should never raise any objections in regard to fortune — that he would never have done so even in his most prosperous days; but there was one question which he wished to ask regarding birth." Alice blushed, and cast down her eyes as she spoke. Then, raising them suddenly and frankly to Langford's face, she added, "It is one of his prejudices, you know, Henry. But even if there should be any difficulty, his love for me, and his esteem for you, will make it but the matter of a moment."

Langford gazed in her face for an instant with a melancholy smile, which almost made her believe that her father's suspicions with regard to his history were correct. The next instant however — whether he understood her meaning clearly or not — he answered, "Set your mind at rest, dear Alice; my birth is as good as your own! — Is your father gone to bed?"

"He went up stairs about half an hour

before you came," said Alice; "but he is not asleep yet, I am sure. I sat up, both to tell you all this, and to put my mind at ease about you and Lord Harold. You were so long absent that I was uneasy. If you had not given me your solemn promise not to quarrel with him, and if my father's grief and agitation had not occupied so much of my thoughts, I am afraid I should have been very foolish, and both terrified and unhappy at your not returning."

"I have been very busy about other things," replied Langford; the chilly recollection of all that had passed in the interval coming back upon him like a sudden gust of cold wind. "But my conversation with Lord Harold only lasted ten minutes. I do not mean to say that he would not willingly have quarrelled with me, but I would not quarrel with him; and I trust that my reputation for courage does not require to be sustained by any such silly contests. However, dear Alice," he continued, suddenly turning the conversation back again to its former subject, — "however, if your father be not asleep, it may put his mind more at ease to hear that means are provided for meeting Lord

Danemore's claim upon him; and you may also tell him, my Alice, in order to remove every shade of doubt, that, although my fortune be but scanty, as it at present stands, yet there is good hope of its being greatly increased, and that my birth is certainly not inferior to that of her whose hand is already too valuable a gift to need the enhancement of superior station."

As he spoke, he raised the hand he held, tenderly, but reverentially, to his lips; for he felt that he was bound to double every outward token of respect at a moment when Alice announced to him, that her own expectations of high fortune were disappointed, and that the rich heiress, who had thought a few hours before she had great wealth and broad lands to give, was now dowerless, except in her beauty, her virtues, and her gentleness.

So he felt, and so he acted; and Alice saw his feelings, and appreciated them to the full.

She rose then to go, but hesitated a moment as she wished him good night, not knowing well how to express all the sensations that his conduct had produced. "Langford," she said,

at length, "how shall I thank you? I will not attempt to do it now, the time is too short; but I shall find time, if endeavouring through life to make you happy be enough."

Langford could not resist it, and for a moment he pressed her to his bosom; adding, "Good night, my Alice, good night, my beloved. Hasten to your father before he is asleep, and I will remain for a few minutes here, to write a note to the landlord of the Talbot, bidding him send up to-morrow morning early the packet, which must have arrived to-night. I will tell him to address it to you; so that, before your father is awake to-morrow, you will have in your own hands the means of freeing him from all apprehension regarding this claim. I trust, too, dear Alice, that the time will come, when he will so much regard me in the light of a son, as to permit me to examine into the matter of these mortgages; and I think, I can show him, and others too, that his estates are far from being as much involved as they have been represented to be."

They parted; and after Langford had written

the note he spoke of, and had given it to a servant to take to the little town early in the morning, he retired to rest. He found in his chamber, busily engaged in laying out his toilet for the night, the old servant Halliday, who, during the whole time he had been confined in consequence of his wound, had attended him with the utmost care and attention, springing from a feeling that he was in some degree paying off a debt of his young mistress, in whose service that wound had been received. There was now in his countenance, though his nature was too respectful to suffer him to put any questions, an anxious sort of inquiringness, which Langford could not resist. "It is not so bad, Halliday," he said. "Your excellent master has alarmed himself too much. All will go quite well, depend upon it."

The man made him a low bow, with an air full of gratitude. "I am very much obliged to you, captain," he said. "I was frightened, I confess; for the steward, you see, told me at least three months ago. But, however, we servants have no right to be talking about such

matters; and, though it is all out of love and regard to Sir Walter and Mistress Alice, perhaps we had better hold our tongues."

"Perhaps so, Halliday," replied Langford; "and now, good night; all will go well, depend upon it."

The man again bowed low and respectfully, and left the room, and Langford proceeded calmly to undress himself; for — though his mind was oppressed, and the moment his thoughts were turned from the immediate subject of Sir Walter Herbert's affairs, they reverted naturally to the more painful topics with which they had before been engaged, — he was not a man to suffer his feelings to overpower him, or to interrupt him in his ordinary habits and occupations. He felt deeply and strongly; but he was too much accustomed to feel deeply and strongly, to suffer the emotions of his mind greatly to affect his corporeal demeanour. It is those who feel by fits and starts alone, that give full way to sudden emotions. Langford could feel as poignantly as any one. He did feel as deeply and as poignantly as any one could feel at that mo-

ment, and yet he proceeded with his ordinary preparations for repose, as if nothing had occurred to affect his feelings, or to shake his heart. He ended by kneeling and commending himself, and those he loved, to the care of the Great Protector; and then lay down to rest—but not to sleep. That he could not command; and for many an hour he remained with his right arm bent under his head, his eyes cast upwards through the darkness, peopling vacancy with strange shapes, and suffering imagination to suggest to him many a melancholy and many a painful image, which, after all, were not so dark and gloomy as the reality soon proved to be. The sky was beginning to turn grey with the morning light, when he first closed his eyes. He started up again, however, in another moment, and then lay awake till it was broad daylight. Perceiving that such was the case, he was about to rise, but then a degree of drowsiness came over him; and yielding to it for a moment, it took possession of him quite, and he fell into a deep sleep.

CHAPTER X.

Day had long dawned, as we have said, ere Langford woke; and even then he woke not of himself, nor till the servant, Halliday, had twice called him by name, standing close by his bedside, and looking upon him with an expression of much interest, indeed, but with a face from which all colour was banished, apparently by fear and agitation.

"Master Langford!" he said, "Master Langford! No guilty man ever slept so sound as that. Poo, nonsense! Captain Langford, I say!"

Langford woke, and looked up, demanding what was the matter.

"Why, sir," replied the servant, "here is good old Gregory Myrtle, the landlord of the Talbot, wants to speak with you immediately.

I met him, as I was going up to the village, coming down here as fast as he could roll."

"Then you have not got the packet I sent for?" said Langford, coolly.

"He has got it, sir, safe," replied Halliday; "but he would not give it up, for he was coming on to you himself."

"He should have given it, as he was directed," said Langford. "Tell him to wait; I will see him when I am dressed."

"But he says, sir, that he must see you directly, — that his business is of the greatest importance, — that there is not a moment to lose."

"Oh, then, send him up," said Langford, "if the matter be so pressing as that."

Halliday instantly disappeared, as if he thought that too much time had been wasted already; and while Langford proceeded to rise, good Gregory Myrtle was heard creaking and panting up the stairs, as fast as his vast rotundity would let him. His face too, was pale, if pale it ever could be called; and he was evidently in a great state of agitation, though the jolly

habitual laugh still remained, and was heard before he was well within the door of Langford's room.

"Haw, haw, haw!" he cried, as he laid down the expected packet before Langford. "Lord a' mercy, Master Harry, this is a terrible business!" he continued. "Well, I never did think — however, it's all nonsense, I know;" and he again burst into a loud laugh, ending abruptly in the midst, and staring in Langford's face, as if for a reply.

"Well, good Gregory," replied Langford, who, in the meantime, had broken open the seals of the packet, and seen that various bills of exchange which it contained, together with other equivalents for money, were all right, — "well, good Master Myrtle, what is it that is very terrible? What is it you did never think? What is it that is all nonsense? I am in the dark, Master Myrtle."

"Gad's my life, sir, they won't let you be in the dark long," cried the landlord of the Talbot; "and I came down to enlighten you first, that you might not be taken by surprise."

"As to what?" said Langford, somewhat impatiently.

"Lord, sir! I thought that Halliday must have told you something, at least," replied Gregory Myrtle, "or that his face must, if not his tongue, for it's all black and white, like the broadside of the 'Hue and Cry;' but the matter is this," he added, after pausing to laugh a moment at his own joke, "it seems that poor Lord Harold, who was a good youth in his way, though he was somewhat sharp upon poachers and deer-stealers, and the like, was murdered last night upon the moor."

"Good God!" exclaimed Langford, clasping his hands. "Good God!"

"It's but too true, sir," continued Myrtle, throwing as much solemnity as he could into his jocund countenance. "It's but too true; and there's poor Lord Danemore, his father, distracted; and for the matter of that, I think Sir Thomas Waller and Sir Matthew Scrope are as much distracted too; for after having been with my Lord since five o'clock this morning, they come down to my house, and

begin examining witnesses and taking evidence, and sending here and there; and the end of it all is—for I heard them consulting over it through a chink in the door — they judge that you are the person who murdered him, only because that mad fellow, silly John Graves, came running down to the village last night for help, swearing he had seen you and Lord Harold with your swords drawn upon each other. So while they were busy swearing in constables, and all that, I thought it but friendly-like to come down here and tell you, in case you might think it right to get upon your horse's back, and gallop away till the business is over."

"Swearing in constables!" said Langford, without seeming to take notice of the worthy host's suggestion. "Why, they don't suppose my name is 'Legion,' do they? One constable, I should suppose, would be quite as useful as twenty."

"Ay, Master Harry," replied Gregory Myrtle; "but they vow that you are connected with the gentlemen of the road, who have been sporting

round about here lately, and they are afraid of a rescue."

"Indeed," said Langford, "the sapient men! However, Master Myrtle, ring that little bell at the top of the stairs."

The silver hand-bell to which he pointed was immediately rung, and Halliday, who had remained halfway down the stairs, was in the room in a moment. No sooner did he appear, than Gregory Myrtle, who put his own construction upon Langford's coolness, exclaimed, "Quick, Master Halliday, quick! saddle the Captain's horse for him!"

"No, no, Halliday," said Langford. "You are making a mistake, my good Master Myrtle. Take this packet, Halliday, and give it into Mistress Alice's own hands, as soon as ever you can. I am going out with Master Myrtle here upon this business, which I see you have heard of. What may be the result of these foolish people's foolish suspicions I cannot tell; but do what you can, Halliday, to keep the matter from the ears of Sir Walter and Mistress Alice as long as you can. Warn the other servants

too; for there is no use of adding fresh vexation to that which your master and mistress are already suffering. You must all know very well that I have nothing to do with this business, and can make that clear very soon. Say, therefore, that I have gone out for a few hours, but left that packet for Mistress Alice, with my best wishes. Now, good Gregory Myrtle, go back to your inn, and tell Sir Thomas Waller and Sir Matthew Scrope that I will be with them in five minutes, as soon as I have dressed myself."

Our host of the Talbot pursued the directions he had received, rolled down the stairs, and laboured along the road towards the village, with his surprise and admiration both excited by the extraordinary coolness and self-possession displayed by Langford under such circumstances. By the time he had reached the middle of the bridge, he perceived a great number of people issuing from the door of his own house; and, ere he was halfway up the street of the little town, he encountered ten or twelve constables and special constables,

headed by the two magistrates in person. No sooner did he approach than the stentorian voice of Sir Thomas Waller — all unlike the dulcet notes of Sacharissa's lover — was heard to exclaim, "Take him into custody, Jonathan Brown!"

"Where hast thou been, Jeffery Myrtle, Jeffery Myrtle?" exclaimed, in softer tones, almost in the same moment, the voice of Sir Matthew Scrope.

"You have been aiding and abetting felony!" cried Sir Thomas.

"You have been warning the guilty to escape!" said Sir Matthew.

"You have been helping the lion to fly from his pursuers!" said Sir Thomas.

"You have been proditoriously giving information of our secret councils!" said Sir Matthew.

"It is being an accessory after the fact!" said his companion.

"It is misprision of treason!" said the other.

"It is levying war against the King!" shouted Sir Thomas.

"It is a gaol delivery!" cried the head constable, determined not to be outdone by his betters.

"Haw, haw, haw!" exclaimed Jeffery Myrtle, laying his two hands upon his fat stomach, "What is the matter with your worships?"

"Hast thou not gone down on purpose," said Sir Matthew Scrope, "to warn Harry Langford, alias Captain Langford, alias Master Harry, to evade and escape the pursuit of justice, by flying out of the back door, while we are approaching the front? Hast thou not done this, Gregory Myrtle? and woe be unto thee if he have so escaped! Take him into custody, I say!"

"Well, your worships," said Myrtle, beginning to look a little rueful under the hands of the constables, "I have been down to Master Harry, I own it; but I went upon other business that I had to do with him. Does not everybody know that I had a packet down for him by a special messenger yesterday-night with

orders to deliver it into his own hands? and if I did talk with him this morning of what was going on, did he not send his compliments to your worships, and bid me say that he would be up with you in five minutes, as soon as he had got his clothes on!"

"Poo! nonsense man!" exclaimed Sir Thomas Waller, growing red in the face. "Do you think we are fools, to be taken in with such a story as that? Are you fool enough yourself to think that he will come?"

"I say, as sure as I am a living man, he will come!" said Jeffery Myrtle. "Ay, more, my masters," he continued, after giving a glance towards the manor house, "I say, there he is coming."

All eyes were instantly turned in the direction in which his own had been bent the moment before, and the figure of a man, which seemed to have just issued out of the gates of the park, was seen walking with a slow calm step along the road towards the village. The magistrates, the constables, and the multitudinous crowd which followed them, all stood

in silence and what we may call *thunderstruckness*, so little credence had they given to the assurances of Gregory Myrtle; for let it be remembered, that the first effect produced by an accusation against any one, upon vulgar minds, is to lead them at once to condemn him. I am afraid there is something in the human heart that loves the act of condemnation — an act which either gratifies malignity, or vanity.

However that may be, the party assembled in the streets of the little town could not believe their eyes, and, indeed, would not believe their eyes long after the form of Henry Langford, a form with which many of them were perfectly acquainted, had become distinctly visible, approaching with slow calm steps towards the spot where they were gathered together. The matter, however, could no longer be doubted; and the magistrates stood still, not knowing very well how to act in such unusual circumstances.

Henry Langford, in the meantime, approached without the slightest appearance of hesitation or dismay at the sight of the for-

midable phalanx which they presented. Walking up to the magistrates with the calm and graceful dignity which characterised all his actions, he bowed slightly, saying, "I am told, gentlemen, that a most distressing occurrence has taken place, and that you imagine there is some cause for supposing that I am implicated in this matter. Now, with your leave, gentlemen, we will go to the inn, as this is no place for discussing such subjects, and we will there investigate the matter accurately. Doubtless, you have had good reason for attributing to me the commission of a crime; but some person or another must have gone out of the way, to insinuate or to urge such a charge against me; and who it is that has been kind enough and liberal enough to do so, I shall make it my business to discover, in order to punish him as he deserves."

Langford concluded somewhat sternly; and the magistrates, entirely taken by surprise, looked rather foolish, and began to imagine that they might have been too hasty in their conclusions. There was a tone and an air, too,

in the person whom they had suspected, which forbad all high words or violent measures. He spoke to them as certainly their equal, if not their superior, and there was so much of the consciousness of innocence in his whole demeanour that it was very difficult to conceive that their suspicions were justified.

Not knowing well what to reply, they followed his suggestion in silence, the one walking on one side of him, and the other on the other. By the time they reached the Talbot, however, they began to recover from the effect of his presence, and Sir Thomas Waller, with what he conceived to be wise foresight and presence of mind, gave the chief constable a hint in a whisper to guard the doors well, and to take care that the prisoner did not escape. They did not, however, venture to treat him as a prisoner in any other respect; and walking up into the room where they had held their investigation, he sat down with them at the table, and begged in a grave but not sarcastic tone, that they would have the goodness to let him know on what grounds they for a moment conceived

that he had had any share in the unfortunate death of Lord Harold.

The magistrates looked to their clerk, who had remained behind, putting the evidence in order while they had proceeded with the constables for the purpose of arresting Langford. The clerk who, upon the whole, seemed a sensible little man, proceeded, as it was very common in those days, to take the whole business into his hands, and recapitulated coolly, but civilly, to Langford the heads of all the evidence that had been taken.

Langford now discovered that the charge against him was much more serious than he had at first imagined. He found that, in the first place, several persons had deposed that silly John Graves, whose adherence to truth was well known, had come down to the town in great agitation begging for help to stop Lord Harold and Master Harry Langford from killing each other. It was proved, also, by the horse boys from the manor-house, that Lord Harold, after having been in the park with Master Langford, had returned for

his horse, about the same time that the other had returned; that the young nobleman had ridden away very slowly, and that Langford, after proceeding part of the way towards the village, had suddenly come back, mounted his horse, and ridden away very rapidly; that he had been absent till between ten and eleven o'clock at night, and that his horse was evidently fatigued, and had been hard ridden. Several people, too, had seen him pass at different times, and on several parts of the road leading to the Moor; and, in short, there was quite sufficient evidence to prove, that a quarrel had taken place between Lord Harold and himself; that they had both gone towards the same spot at the same time, and that he had been absent a sufficient number of hours to commit the deed with which he was charged, and to return.

As the evidence was recapitulated, the worthy magistrates gained greater and greater confidence every moment; and at length Sir Matthew Scrope exclaimed, "If this is not sufficient to justify us in committing the prisoner, I do not know what is."

"Not, perhaps, in committing him, your worship," said the clerk, whose philology was choice without being very accurate; "but certainly in remanding him."

"Why, I did not exactly mean to say committing," rejoined the subservient magistrate; "remanding was the word I meant to use; but where can we remand him to? If we remand him to the county gaol, Justice Holdhim will take the matter out of our hands, and we shall lose all credit with the good Earl for arresting the murderer of his son."

"Would it not be as well," said the clerk, "to take him up at once to the Castle? It is not improbable, that the noble Earl might like to examine him himself; and you can keep him confined there, till you have obtained further evidence to justify his committal."

"A very good thought, a very good thought," cried Sir Thomas Waller, rubbing his hands. "He shall be placed in my carriage with a constable on each side, and we will follow in yours, Sir Matthew, with the other constables on horseback."

Langford had listened in silence to the conversation between the magistrates and their clerk, and though he evidently began to perceive that the affair would be more serious and disagreeable than he had anticipated, he could not refrain from smiling at the arrangement of the stately procession that was to carry him to Danemore Castle. He resolved, however, to make one effort to prevent the execution of a purpose which would, of course, on many accounts, be disagreeable to him; and he therefore interposed, as the clerk was about to leave the room, saying, "You are rather too hasty, gentlemen, in your conclusions, and I think you had better be warned, before you commit an act which you may be made to repent of——"

"Do you mean to threaten us, Sir?" exclaimed Sir Thomas Waller. "Take those words down, clerk. Take those words down."

"I mean to threaten you with nothing," replied Langford, "but the legal punishment to which bad or ignorant magistrates may be sub-

jected for the use, or rather misuse of their authority. You will remark — and I beg that the clerk may take these words down — that one half of the matter urged against me rests upon the reported words of a madman, who has not been brought forward even himself."

"You would not have us take the deposition of an innocent, a born natural!" demanded Sir Matthew Scrope.

"His evidence is either worth something or worth nothing," replied Langford. "You rest mainly upon his testimony reported by others, which is, of course, worth nothing; and yet you will not take his testimony from his own mouth, when I inform you, that if it were so taken, he would prove that though Lord Harold chose to quarrel with me, which I do not deny, that I positively refused to draw my sword upon him, even when he drew his upon me."

"That might be," said the clerk, "to take more sure vengeance in a private way. Their worships have on the contrary to remark, that you have not in any way attempted to account for the space of time you were absent from the

manor-house last night. Neither have you stated where you were, or what was your occupation; and, without meaning to say any thing uncivil, Sir, let me say, that there have been a great many nights, while you remained at the inn, which might require accounting for also. Their worships have not judged harshly of you, nor even given attention to suspicious circumstances, till they found that the whole of your conduct was suspicious." This was spoken while standing beside the chair of Sir Matthew Scrope; and, after whispering a few words in his ear, the clerk left the room.

Langford remained, with his eyes gloomily bent upon the table, without speaking to either of his companions, busy with varied thoughts and feelings, which began to come upon him, thick and many, to weigh him down, and to oppress him. During the early part of the disagreeable business in which he had been engaged, he had thought solely of his own innocence, and of the absurdity, as it seemed to him, of the charge against him; but as the matter went on, other considerations forced themselves upon

his attention. He was conscious he could give no account of where he had been on the preceding night, when the murder was committed; and yet he felt that he was called upon strongly to do so, not for the purpose of freeing himself from suspicion, but with a view to bring the real murderer to justice. Yet how could he reveal any part of what he knew, without bringing down destruction on the head of Franklin Gray, who had no share in the deed; who, at the very time it was committed, was engaged in serving him even at the risk of life; to whom he was bound by so many ties of gratitude, and whose good qualities, though they did certainly not serve to counterbalance his crimes, yet rendered him a very different object in the eyes of Langford from such men as Wiley and Hardcastle? At all events, he felt that it was not for him to bring a man to the scaffold who had saved his life on more than one occasion, and who had shown himself always willing to peril his own in order to procure a comparatively trifling benefit to him.

Mingled with all these feelings was deep and bitter sorrow for Lord Harold; and thus many conflicting emotions, all more or less painful, together with the most painful of all, the knowledge that he could not do his duty with that straight-forward candour and decision, which, in all other situations of life, he had been accustomed to show, kept him in stern and somewhat gloomy silence.

The magistrates, in the meanwhile, conversed apart in a low voice, Sir Thomas Waller delighted with the plan they were about to pursue, and anticipating great credit with Lord Danemore for the arrest of his son's murderer; while Sir Matthew Scrope, who seemed to stand in considerable awe of the old nobleman, declared, that he never half liked to come across the Earl, who was so fierce, and fiery, and imperious. In about a quarter of an hour the clerk returned, and announced that all was ready, and Langford, surrounded by a complete mob of constables, suffered himself to be placed in the rumbling carriage of Sir

Thomas Waller, and was borne away towards Danemore Castle.

The two magistrates followed in the carriage of Sir Matthew, and the train of constables, mounted on all sorts of beasts, came after, swelling the procession; while good Gregory Myrtle stood at his door declaring, that he never saw such a piece of folly in his life; and the poor chambermaid, dissolved in tears, wiped her eyes, and vowed it was impossible so handsome a young man could murder any body.

CHAPTER XI.

After a slow progress of between two and three hours — along roads, which in those days frequently tossed the heavy carriage wheels high in air over some large unbroken stone, and still more frequently suffered them to repose in deep beds of sand or mud, till the efforts of four strong Flanders horses had dragged them forth — the vehicle which contained Henry Langford gained the brow of Danemore hill, and came within sight of the building, which in that part of the country was known under the name of the Castle.

This view was obtained from the side of the park, which lay in front, and which was separated from the road merely by a low park paling crowned with open palisading at the top. A part of the park itself lay between the mansion and the road, which were at the distance of about three quarters of a mile from each other, the ground sloping with a

thousand fanciful undulations, and covered with short turf of a rich bright green in all the dells and hollows, though becoming slightly brown upon the tops of the knolls, where the fierce summer sun, like the withering glare of the great world, had already taken off the freshness of the vegetation.

Scattered here and there, were groups of old hawthorns, contorted into many a strange and rugged form; while on either hand appeared clumps of fine old trees, the chestnut, the beech, and the oak. The latter were seen gradually deepening and clustering together to the right and left of the house, till they joined a thick wood, through which every here and there stood forth, dark and defined amidst the tender green of the other plants, the sombre masses of the pine and fir; like some of those stern memories of sorrow, of sin, or of privation, which are to be found in almost every human heart, and which still make themselves known in gloomy distinctness, amidst the freshest scenes and brightest occupations of life.

In the midst, backed by that thick wood,

stood the house or castle, as it was called, and the name was not ill deserved. It was an irregular pile of building, erected in different ages by its different lords, and showing the taste of the various individuals who had possessed it, as well as of the various ages in which it had been constructed. On the left, was an old unornamented tower, in the simplest style of the old Norman architecture. It was like one of the plain towers of some of the Kentish churches, with square cut windows, or rather loop-holes, under a semicircular arch, which denoted the original form. It was crowned by a plain parapet with a high conical roof.

Then came a long range of buildings in a much later style of architecture, with oriel windows, and a good deal of rich stone carving and ornamental work; then two massive towers projecting considerably before the rest of the façade, and joined to it by two corridors, through each of which was pierced a gateway, under a pointed arch; and then again, as the building sunk into the wood, upon the right, were more towers, and masses of heavy masonry, united in general by long lines of building of

a lighter and more graceful character. On the older parts the ivy had been suffered to grow, though not very luxuriantly. The space in front, too, was kept clear of trees; and even as the carriage passed along, at the distance of nearly a mile, the wide esplanade on which the castle stood, with a part of the barbican, which had been suffered to remain, were distinctly visible.

The constables, who sat with Langford in the carriage of Sir Thomas Waller, gazed up towards an edifice which the people of the country but seldom approached, with feelings of awe and reverence. The eyes of Langford, too, were fixed upon it, but with sensations which they little understood. All that they remarked was, that he kept his eyes fixed upon the castle steadfastly during the whole time that it was visible as they passed along in front; that he looked at it calmly, though gravely; and that, when he had done, he raised his head as if waking from a reverie, and then suddenly turned and gazed from the other window, where a wide and beautiful view was seen, spread out

below, reaching to the old manor house, and the wooded banks and hills beyond.

The carriage then rolled on, and, winding round under the park, entered by a castellated lodge, and drove slowly up to the mansion, the vehicles passing under the arches of the two large towers, which projected from the centre of the building. A loud-tongued bell gave notice of their coming, and three or four servants, fat, pampered, and saucy, made their appearance to answer its noisy summons.

Sir Thomas Waller was the first to speak, and, with an air of importance, he demanded immediately to see the Earl. One servant looked at another, and he, who seemed to be the chief porter, replied shortly that that was impossible, for the Earl had gone out.

"Gone out!" cried Sir Thomas in surprise. "How? where?"

"He is gone out on horseback," replied the man, "that is how, Sir; and as to where, I fancy he is gone to the moor, where my young Lord was killed."

"But we must, at least we ought to, see my Lord the Earl," said Sir Matthew Scrope,

" for we have brought up a prisoner for him to examine."

" I can't say any thing about that," replied the man with a sort of sullen incivility; " my Lord is out, but I will go and ask Mistress Bertha if you like."

" I do not know what Mistress Bertha can do in the matter," said Sir Thomas Waller.

" Oh ! she can do any thing she likes," replied the man with a sneer, to which he did not dare to give full expression.

" Well, ask her — ask her, then," said Sir Matthew; " you know who I am—you know I was with the Earl three or four hours this morning. You know I am a justice of the peace, and one of the quorum."

Sir Matthew did not seem by this announcement to raise his dignity greatly in the eyes of the servant, who walked away with slow and measured steps to make the proposed application. He returned in about five minutes, saying, that Mistress Bertha had replied, that, as it might be a long time before the Earl returned, the magistrates had better leave the prisoner

locked up there, and come back in the evening about the hour of his Lordship's supper.

Sir Matthew Scrope and Sir Thomas Waller looked at each other. There were some points in this suggestion which they did not much like; but then, again, the magical words, "His Lordship's supper," which were coupled in their imagination with fine and exquisite wines from foreign lands, fat haunches, rich sauces, and many another delicacy and luxury, which rumour declared to be prevalent in Danemore Castle, rapidly removed all objections from their minds; and, after a few minutes' consultation between them, they determined to obey to the letter.

The next object of consideration was, how to secure their prisoner, and in what room to place him; but their conference on that point was soon cut short by the porter, who interrupted them by saying, "You had better leave all that to Mistress Bertha; for, depend upon it, she will put him where she likes herself, and most likely has settled it all already. The best way will be to bring him in and go to her. She is in the long gallery."

Although the two magistrates did not at all approve of the whole business being taken out of their hands by a woman, they nevertheless yielded with some symptoms of displeasure; and Langford, being made to descend from the carriage, was escorted by the two constables through a long dim entrance passage, which led into a handsome vestibule beyond. He offered no resistance to their will; he made no observation; he asked no question; but with a calm and thoughtful dignity, which had its effect even upon the pampered servants of the castle, he walked on looking casually at the different objects he passed, as if almost indifferent to the part he was himself acting in the scene.

From the vestibule a handsome flight of stone stairs, lighted by a tall painted window, led up to a gallery extending on either side for about seventy yards; and up these stairs Langford was led, following the two magistrates, who went on with slow steps, preparing to give Mistress Bertha, the housekeeper, a just notion of their dignity and importance. At the top of

the stairs they were met by that personage herself, dressed as we have before described her, except that her broad white coif was no longer surmounted by the black veil with which she covered her head when she went abroad. Her thin aquiline features might have gained an additional degree of sharpness; her sallow skin was, if any thing, more sallow; and the cold severe expression, which always reigned in her countenance, was now increased to a degree of stern bitterness, which somewhat humbled the tone of the two magistrates.

They approached her, however, with a very tolerable degree of pomposity; and Sir Thomas Waller introduced himself, and then presented Sir Matthew Scrope, announcing to her, that they were magistrates of the county, and two of the quorum. As he spoke, the attention of the housekeeper wandered beyond the two worshipful gentlemen altogether, and was attracted to the prisoner, who followed them. There was something in his good looks, his calm and dignified demeanour, his apparel, or his expression of countenance, which made the thin eyelids of Mistress Bertha's eyes expand from the

bright dark orbs they covered, at the first moment they lighted on him, and she demanded, "Is that the prisoner?"

Sir Thomas Waller replied that it was; and then recapitulated what he had been saying in regard to the dignity of himself and Sir Matthew Scrope.

"Yes, yes," replied Mistress Bertha, with her slight foreign accent, "I know who you are, both of you; and now you have nothing to do but to leave the prisoner here till the Earl comes home. You can return at his supper hour. I do not know that he will eat with you himself, but, if he do not, meat shall be provided for you."

"There can be no reason, madam," said Sir Matthew Scrope, "why the Earl should not sup with us; we have supped with men of as high rank, I trow."

"When a man has lost his only son," said the housekeeper sharply, "is that no reason why he should not sup with two fat country knights, to whom his sorrow and his presence would only bring gloom and stiffness? Better sup by your-

selves, and eat, and drink, and make merry, as you are accustomed to do."

"Gadzooks!" said Sir Thomas Waller, in a low voice to his companion; "I think the old lady is right — but, madam," he added in a louder tone, "we must be made sure of the safety of our prisoner."

"Leave that to me, leave that to me," replied the housekeeper shortly. "Follow me, Williams and Hanbury, to guard the prisoner; and you, John Porter, come on too: come with me, young gentleman," she added, speaking to Langford in a more benign tone. "You do not look as if you would commit a murder; but, God knows, looks are deceitful things. Come with me."

"But, madam, we have no authority," interrupted Sir Matthew Scrope.

"Authority!" exclaimed the housekeeper, fiercely raising up her tall thin person to its utmost height, "who talks of authority in this house? You may well say you have no authority, for you lost it all the moment you crossed that threshold. No one has authority here but the

Earl; and, when he is absent, myself — now that that poor boy is gone," she added, while a bright drop rose into her eyes, sparkled upon the black lashes that fringed them, and then fell upon the sallow skin beneath. "I trust in God you did not kill him, young gentleman, for if you did, you committed a great crime."

"Indeed I did not, madam," replied Langford; "I should sooner have thought of killing myself."

"I believe you, I believe you," replied the housekeeper; "but yet I must have you as safely guarded, as if you had. If you want to see where I put him," she continued, speaking to the magistrates, in a somewhat gentler tone than she had hitherto used, "you may come with me: there is a room which no one ever enters but my Lord and myself: it is high up in the oldest tower; and even if he could get through the windows, which he cannot, there is a fall of sixty feet below, clear down. — But come and see it if you will, and you shall have some refreshment after."

Carrying a large key which she had held in her hand from the beginning of the conversa-

tion, she led the way to the end of the gallery in which they stood. Then, passing through another handsome corridor, she ascended a staircase in the older part of the building, which brought them to an ante-room, opening into a large bed-chamber, with windows on each side; and through the western window, and close to it, might be seen projecting the heavy mass of the large square tower that we have mentioned in describing the building. A small low door was exactly opposite to them as they entered; and to the lock of this Mistress Bertha applied the key. It turned heavily, and with difficulty, as if not often used; and the door moving back, gave entrance into a lofty and cheerful chamber, lighted by four small windows.

The strength of the door and the height of the windows showed at once that escape from that chamber was impossible; and the magistrates, holding in remembrance the refreshments which their somewhat ungracious companion had promised them, expressed themselves perfectly satisfied with the security of their prisoner. Langford was accordingly desired

to enter the place of his confinement, and did so at once, merely turning to address the housekeeper as he passed. "Madam," he said, "I am sure you will be good enough to give my compliments to Lord Danemore whenever he returns, and to inform him, first, that I assert my perfect innocence of the charge which these two worthy persons have somewhat too hastily brought against me; and, secondly, that I beg he will take the most prompt and immediate means for investigating the whole affair, as it will be unpleasant for me to submit to this treatment long; and there are plenty of persons in the neighbourhood who will see that justice is done me."

The housekeeper made no other reply than by bowing her head; but when Langford had entered, and she had shut and locked the door, she turned sharply and contemptuously upon the magistrates, saying, "He did not do it! he never did it! you will make yourselves a laughing-stock in the country."

Sir Thomas Waller was about to reply, but she silenced him at once by ordering one of the servants who followed her to have the col

meats laid out in the little hall, and find the butler for a stoup of Burgundy. A proposal made by Sir Matthew Scrope, to leave two of the constables behind in the ante-room, she cut short less pleasantly, telling him that she would have no constables in her master's house except such as were intended to be thrown out of the window.

By this time both magistrates began to find out that it was to no purpose to contest matters in Danemore Castle with this imperious dame; and they accordingly followed her in silence back to the head of the great stairs. There she made them over to the care of one of the men-servants, who in turn led them to the lesser hall, where a collation was set before them, which well repaid them for all their patient endurance.

In the mean while Langford had remained in the solitary chamber which had been assigned to him. As soon as the door was closed he took nine or ten turns up and down the room, in a state of much agitation; then gazed out for a moment from each of the windows by which it was lighted; and then sat down at the table, and

placed his hands for several minutes before his eyes. It is not needful to enter into any detailed account of his feelings; his situation was particularly painful in every respect; and though he was not one of those who give way to each transient emotion, something might well be allowed for discomfort, anxiety, and indignation. When he had thus paused for a few minutes, thinking over his fate, he lifted his eyes and gazed round the chamber, which served as his place of confinement, seeming to take accurate note of all it contained.

The room itself was a cheerful and a pleasant room, with a vaulted ceiling richly ornamented; while the thick walls of the tower were lined with oak, very deep in hue, and finely carved with Gothic tracery. The form of the chamber was perfectly square, and its extent might be four-and-twenty feet each way. The furniture, too, was good though ancient, and of the same carved oak as the panelling. It consisted in a large table, and a smaller one, eight or nine large high-backed chairs, and several curious carved cabinets. But

the objects which most attracted the attention of Langford were two small panels, distinct from the rest of the wainscotting, and ornamented in such a way as to show that they were not at all intended to be concealed, with a small pointed ogee canopy above each, similar to that which surmounted the door by which he had entered, but only smaller in size. In each of these panels was a key-hole surrounded by an intricate steel guard; and it was evident that each covered the entrance of one of those cupboards in the wall, in which our remote ancestors took so much delight.

Besides the door by which he had entered, there was a smaller one, on the opposite side of the room, leading, as Langford conceived, to a staircase in one of the large buttresses; and as he had been a prisoner before, and had found it useful to know all the outlets of his temporary abode, his first action, after gazing round the room, was to approach that second door and try whether it was or was not locked. It was firmly closed, however; and he took his way back towards his seat, pausing, by the way,

to examine the two small closets we have mentioned, and murmuring to himself, as he did so, " This is very strange !"

As he spoke, he drew forth from his vest the key which had been given him on the preceding night by Franklin Gray, and put it in the lock, but did not turn it, though it fitted exactly. He withdrew it again almost instantly, and replaced it in his bosom, then folded his arms upon his chest, and took one or two turns up and down the room, pausing at every second step, and gazing thoughtfully upon the floor.

By the time he had been half an hour in this state of confinement, he heard a key placed in the lock of the door by which he had entered. In another moment it opened, and the tall stately figure of Mistress Bertha appeared. In one hand she carried several books, and in the other some writing paper, with a small inkhorn suspended on her finger. She shut the door after her, but did not attempt to lock it; and then laying down the books and implements for writing on the table, she turned round and gazed fixedly in Langford's face.

"Have we ever met before?" she said at length. "Your face is familiar to me. It comes back like something seen in a dream. Have we ever met before?"

"If we have," replied Langford, "it must have been many years ago, when the face of the child was very different from the face of the man."

She still gazed at him, and after a considerable pause said, "I have brought you some books that you may read, and wherewithal to write, if you like it. In return for this, write me down your name."

Langford smiled, and, taking up the pen, wrote down his name in a bold free hand. The woman gazed at him as he did so; then carried her eye rapidly to the writing. A bright and intelligent smile shone for a moment upon her thin pale lip; and she said, "Enough! enough! that is quite enough. You have been taught to believe that I have wronged you more than I have wronged you; and although I have given you much good counsel and much true information, you have doubted me, and have not fully trusted

me. I tell you now, and I tell you truly, that I have not wronged you, at least as far as my knowledge of right and wrong goes, and therefore I am still willing to do all that I can to serve you. The history of the past I may tell you at some future time, and it will show you that I wronged others less than they thought I did. But there is one whom I will not name, who has wronged you and yours deeply ; and I know his nature—I know human nature too well, not to be sure that implacable hatred and constant persecution is the offspring of such acts, rather than sorrow, remorse, and atonement. It was on that account that I bade you never come here. It was on that account that I bade you fly his presence. Fate, however, has brought you here at a moment when the mortal agony of losing the only creature he really loved may yet tame his fierce heart, and bend his iron will. I can do but little for you, for I am bound by an oath — an oath which has bound me for many years; but fate which has brought you here, and has wrought an extraordinary thing in your behalf, may yet do much. I will

leave it to its course. But with regard to your own conduct, beware! I warn you to beware. Choose well your moment, and of all things be not hasty. But hark, what is that I hear below? There are his horse's feet, and I must leave you. Thank God, those idiot justices are gone."

"Yet one moment," said Langford, as she turned to depart: "I may have thought that you wronged me and mine, but I have not doubted — I have not suspected you, as you suppose. On the contrary, in many things, as you may have seen, I have followed your advice — in others, the advice of one whom I was more strictly bound to confide in."

"Ay, and it was she who taught you to believe — it was she who was weak enough to believe, herself, that I had been guilty of that which I would scorn."

"No!" exclaimed Langford — "no! You mistake: she never did believe you guilty. She owned, that once in a moment of anger she implied so; but she did you justice in that respect through the whole of her life. She told me more than once, too, that she had herself seen

you and assured you that she did not doubt you as you imagined — that anger, having passed away, justice and right judgment had returned."

"But all her words were cold," said Bertha, "and all her letters had something of restraint in them."

"Consider her situation," said Langford in return; "and remember that she had some cause to blame, as yourself acknowledged; though, in regard to other things, she might have done you injustice."

"She did bitter injustice to herself," replied the woman, "and drove me to attach myself to others, though I would fain have attached myself to her; and, having done so, would have served her with my heart's blood; — but I must not linger, I will see you again ere long — farewell!" and thus saying, she left him, locking the door behind her.

CHAPTER XII.

Langford had not been left five minutes alone ere the voices of persons rapidly approaching caught his ear. At first he imagined that they proceeded from the side by which he himself had entered; but the moment after he became convinced that they came from the direction of the other door, which, as he justly supposed, communicated with a staircase in one of the large buttresses. At first, of course, the sounds were indistinct, but, a moment after, a key was placed in the lock, and a loud deep voice was heard exclaiming, "I will stop for nothing till I have seen him face to face! Where is this murderer of my son?"

The door was thrown violently open before those words were fully spoken, and the Earl of Danemore himself stood before the prisoner.

He was a tall, handsome, powerful man, wide-chested, broad-shouldered, and still very mus-

cular, without being at all corpulent. He might be sixty-three or sixty-four years of age, and his hair was snowy white. His eyebrows, however, and his eyelashes, both of which were long and full, were as black as night. There was many a long deep furrow on his brow, and a sort of scornful but habitual wrinkle between the nostril of the strong aquiline nose and the corner of his mouth. On his right cheek appeared a deep scar, round, and of about the size of a pistol-ball; and on the chin was a longer scar, cutting nearly from the lip down into the throat and neck. He was dressed in a suit of plain black velvet, with the large riding boots and heavy sword, which were common about fifteen or sixteen years before the period of which we now speak, but which were beginning by this time to go out of fashion.

On entering the room, his teeth were hard set together, his brow contracted till the large thick eyebrows almost met, and his whole air fierce and agitated. His quick eyes darted round the room in a moment, and alighted upon Langford, who turned and faced him at once.

The moment, however, that their looks met, a strange and sudden change came over the whole appearance of Lord Danemore. He paused abruptly, and stood still in the middle of the room, gazing in Langford's face, while the frown departed from his brow, and he raised his hand towards his head, passing it twice before his eyes, as if he fancied that some delusion had affected his sight. His lips opened, as if he would have spoken, but for a moment or two no sounds issued forth; and the calm, quiet, steady gaze with which Langford regarded him, seemed to trouble and agitate him.

"What is your name? what is your name?" he exclaimed rapidly when he could speak. "Who brought you here?"

"My name is Henry Langford," replied the prisoner. "An officer in the service of his Majesty; and, if you seriously ask, my Lord — for I suppose I have the honour of speaking to the Earl of Danemore — if you seriously ask who brought me hither, I have only to reply two very silly persons calling themselves magistrates, who have entertained, or rather manu-

factured, amongst themselves a charge against me for which there is not the slightest foundation."

"Henry Langford! Henry Langford!" repeated the Earl, casting his eyes upon the ground and then raising them again to Langford's face, every line and feature of which he seemed to scan with anxious care. "Pray, of what family are you?"

"My father," replied Langford, "was a gentleman of some property in England, of which property, however, I have been unjustly deprived;" and as he spoke he fixed his eyes steadfastly upon the Earl; but that nobleman's countenance underwent no change, and he proceeded — "My mother was also a lady of some property ——"

"Where were you born?" demanded the Earl quickly.

"Though your questions are rather unceremonious, my Lord, for a perfect stranger," Langford replied, "I will not scruple to answer them. I was born in a small town in this country."

"Not in France?" demanded the Earl

quickly. "I do not ask without a motive — not in France? — Are you certain not in France?"

"Perfectly certain," replied Langford. "My mother's family, however, were French — related to the illustrious family of Beaulieu."

"So!" said the Earl, "so! How nearly are you related to that family? — are you sure not in France?"

"Quite certain," repeated Langford. "I have lived much in France, which may have given me some slight foreign accent; and as to my relationship to the Beaulieus, I can really hardly tell how near. I have only heard my mother say, that she was nearly related to them."

"It cannot be! It cannot be!" said the Earl, closing his eyes and looking down upon the ground. "Is your mother living?"

A cloud came over Langford's brow: "She is not," he said.

The Earl again seemed interested. "How long has she been dead?" he asked.

"About two years," Langford replied, and

thereupon the Earl once more shook his head, saying, "It cannot be! — You are very like the late Marquess of Beaulieu," he added — "extremely like; and though circumstances have compelled me to discontinue my acquaintance with that family, I knew the Marquess once, and loved him well. I could have almost fancied that you were his son, and for his sake I cannot regard you with any other eyes than those of kindness. — But yet what do I say?" he continued, while his brow again grew dark. "They tell me you have murdered my son, my only son. How strange, if the son of the man who had so nearly killed the father, should, five-and-twenty years after, have slain the son!"

"You forget, my Lord, and you mistake altogether," replied Langford. "In the first place, I am not the son of the Marquess of Beaulieu; and, in the next place, I assure you most solemnly by all I hold dear — I pledge you my honour as a gentleman and a soldier, and my oath as a Christian and a man — that I have had no more share in this unfortunate event than you have."

"I would willingly believe you," answered the Earl, "most willingly, for yours is a countenance from which I have been accustomed to expect nothing but truth and honour. Yet why do these men accuse you? Why, if there be not proof as strong as truth itself, why do they dare to bring an accusation against one of your high house? Oh, young man! young man! if you have slain him by fraud or villainy, I will take vengeance of you by making you the public spectacle, and giving you up to the rope and scaffold: chains shall hang about you even in your death, and your bones shall whiten in the wind. But, if you have slain him foot to foot and hand to hand, you shall meet a father's vengeance in another way. Ay! old as I am, I will take your heart's blood, and you shall find that this arm has lost nothing of its skill and but little of its strength. You shall learn what a father's arm can do when heavy with the sword of the avenger!"

"Once more, my Lord," replied Langford calmly, "I assure you that I am perfectly innocent. I assure you that, neither fairly and

openly, nor covertly and treacherously, have I had aught to do with your son's death. The sole ground for suspicion against me has been what I will not conceal from you, my Lord, that, upon a slight quarrel between us, he drew his sword upon me, in the park of Sir Walter Herbert."

"Ay, Sir Walter Herbert!" exclaimed the peer with a bitter sneer; "the pitiful old fool! He and his fair dainty daughter, Mistress Alice, they would none of my son, would they not? He shall pay for it in prison, and she shall see him rot before her eyes.—Ay, now I guess how it all is. She has found a lover in fair Master Henry Langford, has she? and he has murdered a rival who might have proved troublesome. They shall answer for it, they shall answer for it!—Ho! below there!" he continued approaching the door. "Bring me up the papers which those two knights left!"

Langford suffered him to proceed with the wild and rapid starts to which the vehemence of his passions led him; but when he paused, the prisoner took up the conversation, saying.

"I was about to tell you, my Lord, that your son did seek a quarrel with me; did draw his sword upon me; did try to induce me to follow his example; but in vain."

"What!" interrupted the peer, "did you refuse to fight him? How was that? a soldier, and a man of your race?"

"I did refuse to fight him, my Lord," replied Langford, "for particular reasons of my own. I have had many opportunities of showing that fear forms no part of my nature, and I am not at all apprehensive of ever being mistaken for a coward."

He spoke with a calm and easy dignity, slightly throwing back his head, while the fine-formed nostril expanded with a sense of honourable pride. The Earl gazed upon him attentively, the angry fire that had been in his eyes gradually subsiding as he did so; and he repeated more than once, in a low voice, "So like! So strangely like!"

At that moment, with the rapidity of one accustomed to obey the orders of a quick and imperious master, a servant appeared bringing in the

bundle of papers which contained the evidence collected against Langford at Moorhurst. The Earl cast himself into a chair, spread the papers out upon the table, and ran his eye rapidly over them, one after another. Langford had also seated himself, and watched the proceedings of the Earl attentively, though neither of them spoke for some minutes.

When the Earl had done, he looked up in the prisoner's face, and, after pausing with a thoughtful air for several moments, he said, "This is a case of suspicion against you, but nothing more. I, myself, the person most interested, cannot make more of it; and from what I see of you, from your face and from your family, I will add that I do not believe you guilty."

"My Lord, you do me justice," replied Langford, "and it makes me right glad to see you so inclined. There was an old custom which was not without its value, for human nature cannot be wholly mastered even by the most consummate art; and I am now willing to recur to that old custom, to give you further

proof that you judge rightly of me. Let me be taken to the room where your poor son lies. I will place my hand upon his heart, and swear to my innocence. I do not suppose, my Lord, that the blood would flow again, if I were culpable; but I do believe, that no man, conscious of such a crime as murder, could perform that act, without betraying by his countenance the guilty secret within him. I am ready to perform it before any persons that you choose to appoint."

"Are you not aware," demanded the Earl sternly, "that the body has not been found?"

"Good God!" exclaimed Langford, his whole face brightening in a moment, "then perhaps he is living yet. This is the most extraordinary tale that ever yet was told — a man arrested — accused — well nigh condemned for the murder of another who is probably alive. A thousand to one he is still alive! Oh, my Lord, be comforted, be comforted!"

"You deceive yourself, young man," replied the Earl with a melancholy shake of the head, "you deceive yourself. His death is but too

clearly proved. His white horse returned last night alone, with his own neck and the saddle all stained with blood. The road by Upwater Mere was found drenched with gore—with my child's gore! and his cloak was found amongst the beeches hard by, pierced on the left side with a pistol shot, which must have been fired close to his bosom, for the wadding had burnt the silk. It, too, was stiff with blood. There were traces of several horses' feet about, but no trace of where the body had been carried; though I myself—I his father—have spent several hours in seeking the slightest vestige that might direct me. Doubtless it is thrown into the Mere;" and as he spoke he covered his eyes with his hands, and remained for several minutes evidently overpowered with deep emotion, against which he struggled strongly but in vain.

Langford, too, was moved, and after having waited in silence for several minutes, in the hope that the agitation which his companion suffered would pass away, he ventured to address some words of comfort to Lord Danemore; saying, "I am deeply grieved, my Lord, that you have

such cause for apprehension, but still I cannot help hoping that all these causes for believing the worst may prove fallacious, and that your son may yet be restored to you."

"No, no, Sir! no!" replied the Earl, "I will not deceive myself, nor do I wish to be deceived. Such evidence is too clear. I am not a child or a woman, that I cannot bear any lot assigned to me. I can look my fate in the face, however dark and frowning its brow may be, and can to say to it, 'Thou hast but power over me to a certain degree; over my mind thou canst not triumph; and even whilst thou wringest my heart and leavest my old age desolate, I can defy thee still!'"

Langford bent down his eyes upon the ground, and did not reply for several minutes. He did not approve the spirit in which those words were spoken, but yet it was not his task to rebuke or to admonish; and when he did reply, he again sought to instil hope.

"Your Lordship says," he observed at length, "that the evidence is too clear. It is certainly clear enough to justify great and serious

apprehensions, but not to take away hope, or to impede exertion. I remember having heard of an instance, which occurred in far distant climates, where the causes for supposing a person dead were much more conclusive than in the present instance. A sailor had left the ship to which he belonged, and wandered on shore in a place infested with pirates. He did not return. Boats were sent after him, and in tracing the course of one of the rivers up which he was supposed to have taken his way, his clothes were found bloody, torn, and cut with the blows of a sword: a leathern purse, which he was known to have carried full of money, was found farther on, devoid of its contents; and farther still a mangled and mutilated body, in which almost all his comrades declared they recognised his corpse; and yet, three years after that, he rejoined the ship to which he belonged, having made his escape from the party of robbers by whom he had been taken. The body which had been found was that of another man, though the clothes and the purse undoubtedly were his own."

While he spoke the Earl turned deadly pale, gazed upon him for a moment or two with a straining eye, then suddenly started up, and without a word of reply quitted the room.

Langford at first seemed surprised, but smiled slightly as he saw him go: then calmly sat down at the table, took up the papers which the Earl had left behind him, read over the evidence against himself, and wrote in the margin a number of observations, wherever any strained or unjust conclusion seemed to have been drawn by the magistrates. He had been occupied in this manner about an hour, when the Earl again made his appearance. His manner was very different from what it had been on the previous occasion. There was a want of that fierce energy which had before characterised it; there was a doubtfulness, a hesitation, and a vagueness, quite opposed to the keen sharp decision of his former demeanour. He trusted Langford more as an acquaintance, more even as a friend, than as a prisoner. Two or three times he spoke of the chances of his son being still alive, and referred vaguely to the story

which Langford had told him, but then darted off suddenly to something else.

At length, however, he took up the papers on which the other had commented, and without noticing the observations that he had written said, it was unjust, upon a case where there was nothing made out against him but suspicion, that he should be detained as a close prisoner. "If, therefore," he said, "you will give me your word not to attempt to make your escape, the doors shall be thrown open to you; this chamber and the next shall be your abode for the time, though they should have put you somewhere else, for this room is appropriated to me. Here," he continued in a thoughtful and abstracted tone, "when I wish to think over all the crowded acts of a long, eventful, and constantly changing life, I come and sit, where no sound interrupts me but the twittering of the swallow as it skims past my windows. Here I can people the air with the things, and beings, and deeds of the past, without the empty crowd of the insignificant living breaking in upon my solitude, and sweeping way the thinner but more thrilling creations

called up by memory. I know not how it is, young gentleman, that there is scarcely any one but you, whom I could have borne patiently to see in this chamber; but your countenance seems connected with those days to which this room is dedicated. There is a resemblance, a strong and touching resemblance to several persons long dead; and that likeness calls up again to my mind many a vision of my youthful days — days, between which and the dark present, lies a gulph of fiery passions, sorrows, and regrets. I know not wherefore they put you here, or who dared to do it, but it is strange, that, being here, you seem to my eyes the only fit tenant of this chamber except myself. Here I sit and read the letters of dead friends — here I sit and ponder over the affections and the hatreds, the hopes, the fears, the wrath, the enjoyment, the sorrow, the remorse of the past — here often do I sit and gaze upon the pictures of those I loved in former times, of the dead, and the changed, and the alienated; of persons who when those pictures were painted, never thought that there could come a change upon

them, or upon me, either in the bodily or the mental frame —never dreamed of the mattock, and the grave, and the coffin, and the slow curling worm that has long since revelled in their heart — no, nor of fierce and fiery contention, envy, jealousy, rivalry, hatred, the death of bright affection, and the burial of every warm and once living hope. Here am I, still wont to gaze upon their pictures, and I know not how it is, but it seems to me as if your face were amongst them."

"I fear me, my Lord," replied Langford, "that those endowed with strong feelings and strong passions, are most frequently like children with a box of jewels, squandering precious things without knowing their value, and gaining in exchange but gauds and baubles, the paint and tinsel of which is soon brushed off, leaving us nothing but regret. There is no time of life, however, I believe, at which we may not recover some of the jewels which we have cast away, if we but seek for them rightly; and I know no means likely to be more successful than that

which you take in tracing back your steps through the past."

"It is a painful contemplation," said Lord Danemore, "and I fear that in the dim twilight of age, let me trace back my steps as closely as I will, I am not likely to find again many of the jewels that I scattered from me in the full daylight of youth."

"Perhaps, my Lord," replied Langford, "you might if you were to take a light.—However," he added, seeing a look of impatience coming upon the Earl, "I am much obliged to you for your offer of a partial kind of freedom. I never loved to have a door locked between me and the rest of the world: and I willingly promise you to make no attempt to escape during the whole of this day, for of course my promise must have a limit. In the course of that day you will most likely be able to procure farther information in regard to this sad affair; and I do trust and hope that it may be such, as may relieve your bosom from the apprehensions which now oppress you."

"I must exact your promise for two days,"

said the Earl, "for I have sent to tell those two foolish men who brought you here, that I cannot deal with them to-day, and have bidden them, in consequence of what you have said, though with but little hope, to cause search of every kind to be made through the country round. There are one or two questions, also, which I would fain ask you, but I will not do it now—yet I know not why I should not—but no, not now! Have I your promise?" "You have," replied Langford; and the Earl, after pausing and hesitating a moment or two longer, quitted him by the chief entrance, leaving the doors open behind him. "There is but one thing I ask of you," added the Earl as he turned to depart; "should you leave these two rooms, lock the door of the one in which you now are till you return, for I do not suffer the feet of ordinary servants to profane it."

When Langford was alone, he paused for a moment or two to think again over his situation; and then, with a natural desire to use the freedom that had been given him, opened the door of the chamber in which he had been placed,

and proceeded through the bedroom beyond, to the head of the staircase. Remembering the Earl's request to lock the door, he turned back to do so, and when he again approached the stairs, the voice of some one singing below rose to his ear. The tone in which the singer poured forth his ditty was low, but after listening for a moment, Langford recognised the voice of the poor half-witted man, John Graves, and a sudden hope of finding means of clearing himself by the aid of that very person struck him. He descended the stairs slowly, and at the bottom of the first flight, found the wanderer sitting on the lower step, with his head hanging down in an attitude of dejection; and laying his hand upon his shoulder, Langford caused him to start up suddenly and turn round.

"Ah, Master Harry!" cried the man in one of his saner moods, "is that you? It is you I came to see. I heard they had taken you up, and locked you up here, and I came to see if I could help you, for you have always been kind and generous to me; and then, if I could not help you, I could sing you a song, and that

would do you good, you know — I always said you ought to have your rights, you know; but I must not say so here, or they will scold me as they did before."

"Come up hither with me, John," said Langford; "I believe that you can help me if you will — but how came you here? — Do they suffer you knowingly to wander about the house in this manner?"

"Not as far as this," replied the man, laughing, "not as far as this. They would soon drive me down if they saw me above the grand stairs. But about the passages below they never mind me. Only I sometimes creep up and find my way about all the rooms, and if I hear a step, hide behind a window-curtain. It is no later than last night that I and another — but I must not speak of that. Never you mind, Master Harry, you will have your rights still."

"Perhaps so, John," answered Langford, "though I do not think you well know what my rights are. However, now follow me up here." Thus saying, he led the way to the apartments which had been assigned to him, followed

quickly by the madman, whose step was as noiseless and stealthy as if he had been going to murder the sleeping. When he saw Langford approach the door of the inner room, he cast an anxious and furtive glance towards the top of the stairs and listened, and as soon as the lock was turned and the entrance free, he ran in and closed it after him, looking straight towards one of the small cupboards in the wall, saying, "There! there! Be quick for fear some one should come!"

Langford gazed on him with some surprise, and then replied, "You know more of these matters than I thought you did. However, you mistake. I want you merely to bear a letter and a message for me."

"But the papers! the papers!" exclaimed the other. "Are you not going to take the papers?"

"No!" exclaimed Langford. "Certainly not by stealth, John."

"Then it is you that are mad," replied his companion; "and they have mistaken me for you. I will go and make affidavit of it."

"I should not hold myself justified in taking them stealthily," replied Langford. "Perhaps, ere I quit this house, I may claim them boldly — and some time or another I must make you tell me how you know so much of matters I thought secret; but time is wanting now, and we may be interrupted. I have some reason to think, that, if you will, you can find out for me a person called Franklin Gray."

"Can I find him out?" said the madman. "Ay, that I can; in two hours I can be with him."

"Will you bear a message from me to him?" demanded Langford, "without forgetting a word of it, and without telling a word to any one else?"

"That I will joyfully," replied the other; "I never forget — I wish I could — It is that turns me mad — I remember too well; and I will tell nothing, though they should put me to the torture. I always tell truth if I tell any thing; but I can hold my tongue."

"Well then," said Langford, "tell Franklin Gray for me, that I am here kept a prisoner

on a charge of shooting poor Lord Harold. If he be shot, I entertain but few doubts in regard to who it was that did it; and I ask Franklin Gray, in honour and in memory of our old companionship, to give me the means of clearing and delivering myself."

"Franklin Gray shot him not," replied the madman; "that I know full well. Franklin and I are friends; don't you know that, Master Harry?—For a fox, he is the best of foxes! But I'll do as you tell me, however."

"I know he did not shoot him," answered Langford; "I am as sure of that as you are. Nevertheless, carry him my message. But hold," he said, seeing the man turning abruptly to depart, "I will write a few lines to good Sir Walter Herbert, which I shall be glad if you will give into his hands, or into the hands of his daughter."

The half-witted man signified his willingness to do any thing that Langford told him; and sitting down at the table, that gentleman wrote a few lines to Sir Walter Herbert, briefly explaining to him his situation, and begging him,

in case of his being detained beyond the close of the subsequent day, to take measures to ensure that justice was done him. This epistle he had no means of sealing; and merely folding it up in the form of a letter, he put it into the hands of his hair-brained, and suffered him to depart.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE man who, as we have said, received in that part of the country the name of Silly John, stole quietly down the stairs, and finding no body to impede his proceedings had no sooner entered the corridor below, than he was seized with a determination of descending the great staircase, thinking, as he expressed it in his commune with himself, that it would make him feel like a lord for once in his life.

We all see and know that every step which we take in our onway path through existence, whether directed by reason or prompted by caprice, whether apparently of the most trifling nature or seemingly of the utmost consequence, not only affects ourselves and the course of our own fate, but more or less influences the state, the fortunes, and the future of others, even to the most remote bounds of that vast space in which cause and effect are constantly weaving

the wide-spread web of events. So philosophers teach us; and such was certainly the case in the present instance; for the whim which led Silly John down the grand staircase of Danemore Castle, was by no means without its effect upon Henry Langford; and might, under many circumstances, have produced consequences of very great importance. The whole house was silent, for the servants of all classes and denominations were busy at their afternoon meal; and the half-witted man, after looking round to see that no one was near, put on an air of mock dignity, stuck the cock's feather more smartly in his hat, threw out one leg and then the other with a wide stride, and saying to himself in a low tone, "Now I 'm a lord!" began to descend the staircase. At that moment his eye fell upon a sword, with its belt and sword-knot, hanging up in the corridor, and in order to make his figure complete, he turned back and decorated his person therewith.

When he had got to the bottom of the stairs, however, he looked at the sword with a somewhat wistful eye, as if he would fain have re-

tained to ornament his person; but then, muttering to himself, "No, no, I must not steal! Remember the eighth commandment, John Graves!" he unslung the sword, and looked it all over. When he had done he burst into a laugh, exclaiming, "It is Master Harry's sword, the very sword with which he slit that fox's neck, when they attacked Mistress Alice. They have taken it away from him, but I'll take it back again;" and so saying, he ran hastily up to the door of the chamber in which he had left Langford, and after tapping loudly with his knuckles, laid the weapon down upon the threshold, and tripped rapidly away.

While Langford opened the door, and with some surprise took up his own sword, of which he had been deprived by the magistrates when he had been brought to the Castle, Silly John made the best of his way down the stairs, out of the front gates, across the esplanade and into the park. The feat that he had performed seemed to have given him a sort of impetus which he could not resist; and he ran on across the park as fast as his lameness would let him,

scrambled over the park paling, and never stopped till he had arrived at that point of the road where it branched into two divisions. There, however, he paused; and entered into one of those consultations with himself which were not unfrequent with him, and which formed a peculiar feature in his madness.

He suddenly remembered that he had two commissions to perform, and that he had no directions as to which was to be first executed. On all such occasions of difficulty, Silly John argued with himself on both sides of the question with the nicety of a special pleader, weighing every motive on either part, starting difficulties and solving them, seeing differences and shades of difference where none existed; and, in fact, acting the part of Hudibras and Ralpho both in one.

On the present occasion, he stood discussing the question of whether he should first deliver the letter to Sir Walter Herbert, or the message to Franklin Gray, for nearly an hour; and was seen by many persons who passed, laying down to himself the reasons, pro and con,

with the forefinger of his right hand tapping the forefinger of his left, at every new argument on either side. As he found it utterly impossible to settle the matter by dint of reasoning, he fell, at length, upon an expedient which decided it as rationally as any other means he could have brought to bear upon it. Fixing himself firmly upon the heel of his uninjured foot, he extended the other leg and arm, and whirled himself violently round as if on a pivot, determining to follow that road to which his face was turned when he stopped.

It happened that the direction in which he at length found his face was towards the manor-house; and he accordingly bent his steps thither with all speed. The quantity of time which he had lost in his consultation with himself, however, and that occupied in going, rendered it very late in the day before he arrived; so that, although the servant to whom he delivered the note, asked him in a kindly tone to come in and take some beer, he looked wistfully at the sky, from which the sun had just gone down; and shaking his head, walked away, turning

his steps towards the moor. The distance, as we have before shown, was considerable; and as he went, the long twilight of a summer's evening grew dimmer and more dim, faded away entirely, and night succeeded. Still, however, the poor fellow toiled on up the hill, followed the road that led across the moor, and passed the very spot where Langford had see the pistol fired on the preceding night.

As he went by the beeches, he thought he heard a rustling sound beneath them; and, though accustomed to go at all hours through the wildest and least frequented paths, either fatigue and want of food, or some other cause, had unnerved him, and the sound made him start. He ran on upon the road as fast as he could, and then turned to look behind him. There was no moon, the night was sultry and dark, and it was difficult to distinguish any object distinctly; but he saw, or believed he saw, two men come out from the beeches as if to follow him; and he again ran on with all speed, taking his way across the moor. After he had gone about half a mile, he cast himself flat down amongst some

fern and heath, and lay there for ten minutes or a quarter of an hour; after which he arose again, and hurried on towards the dwelling of Franklin Gray. Twice he thought he heard steps behind him; and his heart rejoiced when he saw the gate in the wall that surrounded the court. The gate was locked, however; the whole house looked dark and untenanted; not a window in the tower, or in the large building by the side, showed the slightest ray of light; and as he stood and shook the gate, he distinctly heard quick steps coming on the very path he had pursued.

A degree of terror, which he had seldom before felt, now took possession of him; and he ran round the wall as fast as he could, seeking for some entrance at the back. The first gate that he met with resisted like the other; but a second, fifty or sixty yards farther on, opened at once, and he hurried on towards the part of the building before him. He still seemed to hear the steps behind him; and with fear that amounted almost to agony, he felt along the wall for a bell or some other means of making himself

heard. As he did so, his hand came against a door, which gave way beneath his touch, and he had almost fallen headlong down some steps. He caught, however, by the lintel in time; and glad of any entrance, went down slowly, feeling his way with his foot and hands, till he reached a level pavement. The air was cooler than it had been above; and a small square aperture at a considerable distance before him, while it gave admission to the wind, also showed the sort of faint dim light which yet lingered in the sky. Towards it he took his way after having listened for a moment with a beating heart, to ascertain whether he was pursued; and having made himself sure that he was not.

For a few paces, nothing interrupted his progress; but the next moment, he stumbled over some object on the ground; and as he attempted to raise himself, his hand came in contact with something that felt like cloth. He instantly drew it back: but, after pausing a moment and hesitating, he stretched it out slowly again, and it lighted upon the cold clammy features of a dead man's face. Starting back, he again fell

over the object which had thrown him down before, and which he now found to be a coffin.

Although all these circumstances were in themselves horrible, they served, in some degree, to relieve the mind of poor John Graves, who now remembered the ruins of the old church, which stood near, and naturally concluded that he had got into the vaults. The confusion of his brain prevented him from remembering that the place had been long unused for its original and legitimate purposes, and he was not one of those who feel any horror at the mere presence of the dead. On the contrary, the sight of the clay after the spirit had departed, seemed to offer to his madness a curious matter of speculation, and he was fond of visiting the chamber of death amongst all the cottages in the neighbourhood.

After he had a little recovered himself, then, he muttered, "It's a corpse! I wonder if it is a man or a woman;" and he put out his hand again towards the face, and ran it over the jaw and lips, to feel for the beard.

"It must be a gentleman to be put in the

vault," he continued; "his hand will tell that! Poor men's hands are hard; and the rich keep their palms soft. I wonder if it is gold makes men's palms soft? Yes, it is a gentleman," he continued, as he slid his hand down the arm to the cold palm of the dead man.

But at that moment a light began to stream through the door by which he had entered, and his terror was once more renewed "If they catch me here," he muttered, "they will think I am come to steal the coffin plates;" and as the increasing light showed him some of the objects round, he perceived a broken part of the wall which separated that vault from the next, and which lay in ruin amidst the remains of former generations; with many a coffin stript of all its idle finery by the hand of time, piled up against it, together with dust and rubbish, and the crumbling vestiges of mortality.

Behind the screen thus formed, the half-witted man crept, and lay trembling with a vague dread of he did not well know what; while the light, which by this time had approached close to the door, remained station-

ary for a moment; and two or three voices were heard speaking in a low tone. The next moment, three men descended into the vault; one of whom bore a flambeau in his hand: but for the first two or three minutes after they entered, Silly John could only hear without seeing, as his terror prevented him from making the slightest movement.

"You may as well wipe away the blood from off his face before you put him into the box," said one, as he and his companions seemed to stand by the corpse and gaze upon it with curious and speculating eyes.

"That was a deadly shot," said the other. "Poor devil! he never spoke a word after."

"He well deserved it," said a third voice, "that's my opinion; and when that's the case, the deadlier the shot the better. But let us make haste, Master Hardie; though I do not see why he should be buried with that smart belt on. Come, let us toss up for it. Here is a crown-piece. You toss, Hardie."

While this conversation had been going on, the poor half-witted man had remained en-

sconced behind the coffins and broken wall, trembling in every limb. This tremor assuredly proceeded from fear, and not from cold, for the air, which had been sultry all day, had now grown oppressively hot; and the heavy clouds, which had been rolling up during the evening, like a vast curtain between earth and the free breath of heaven, had by this time covered the whole sky: while a few large drops of rain, pattering amongst the ruins of the church and the broken stones and long grass without, formed no unmusical prelude to the storm that was about soon to descend.

Scarcely had Doveton spoken (for he it was who took the lead upon the present occasion) when a faint blue gleam suddenly lighted up the inside of the vault, proceeding from the small square window, and flashing round upon all the grim and sombre features of the place, coffins, and sculls, and bones, and broken and disjointed stones, and high piles of mouldy earth, consisting chiefly of the dust of the dead. It came like the clear and searching glance of eternal truth, making dark secrets bright, and

bringing forth from their obscurity all the dim hidden things of earth. That gleam flashed upon the countenances of the three robbers, as they stood around the corpse, unmoved, unshaken by the solemn aspect of death, by the awful picture of their own mortality. The sudden glance of the lightning, however, made them each start involuntarily. He who held the crown-piece in his hand let it drop. No thunder followed the first flash, but another far more bright and vivid succeeded, playing round the buckles and clasps of the very sword-belt that one of them was in the act of removing from the corpse. A crash, which could not have been louder had the fragments of a mountain been poured upon their heads, came instantly after, shaking the whole building as if it would have cast down the last stone of the ruin.

"By——," cried one of the robbers, uttering a horrid imprecation, "what a peal!"

"Ay, and what a flash!" said another; "but come, take off the belt, for fear he gets up off the trestles and stops us!"

"Ay, if we let him," said Doveton; "but may

I never speak again, if I did not think I saw his lips move! There! there!" he continued, as another flash of lightning shone again upon the features of the dead man, reversing all the lights which the flambeau had cast upon it, and making the whole features, without any real change, assume an expression entirely different. "There! there! I told you so! Look, he is grinning at us."

"Pooh, nonsense!" cried another; "the man's dead! he'll never grin again. Yet, by my life, there is the blood running!" And so far he spoke truth; for the jerk which had been given to the body in order to detach the sword-belt had caused a stream of dark gore to well slowly down and drop upon the ground.

"Let the belt be! let the belt be!" cried Hardcastle. "Hold the torch to his face and see if he does move!——No, no! he is still enough! but after all, one does not like dragging him out in such a night as this, to bury him upon the cold moor. It would not matter if he were alive; but let us stay here till the storm is over, and you, Harvey, run and get us some drink.

It's neither a nice night, nor a nice place, nor a nice business; so we may as well have something to cheer us."

"I have no objection to the flagon," said Doveton, as Harvey left them to obtain the peculiar sort of liquid cheerfulness to which men engaged in not the most legitimate callings generally have recourse: "I have no objection to the flagon, but you know we must have done the job before the morning, Hardie, and the grave is not dug yet."

"Oh, we'll soon dig the grave," replied Hardcastle, "the ground is soft upon the moor, and it need not be very deep.—Do you think, Doveton, that when folks are dead they can see us? I have often thought, that very likely they can see and hear just as well as ever, but can't move or speak."

"I hope not! I hope not!" cried his companion; and at that moment came another flash of lightning, gleaming round and round the vault, followed by the tremendous roar of the thunder, and the rushing and the pattering of the big rain.

The whole scene was so awful; the corpse, the robbers, the vault, the thunder-storm, their speculations upon the dead, the mixture of superstition and impious daring which they displayed, the revel that they were preparing to hold by the side of a murdered body, and the images of the flagon and the grave, formed altogether a whole so terrible and so extraordinary, that the poor man who lay concealed and witnessed the strange and dreadful proceeding, could endure it no longer; but starting up in a fit of desperation, he darted forward, overthrowing the pile of coffins before him, and rushing with the countenance of a risen corpse towards the stone steps which led into the vault. Surprised and terrified, the two robbers started back, the flambeau fell and nearly extinguished itself upon the ground, the body of the dead man was overthrown at their feet; and rushing on without pause, John Graves had gained the stairs and effected his exit, before they knew who or what it was that had so suddenly broken in upon their conference.

Running as if a whole legion of fiends had

been behind him, heeding not the deluge of rain that was now falling from the sky, but staggering and putting his hand to his eyes, when the bright gleam of the lightning flashed across his path, the half-witted man hurried back again with all speed towards the moor, nor ceased for a moment the rapid steps which carried him forward, till he had reached the beeches by Upwater-mere. There sitting down and clasping his hands over his knees, he remained with his whole thoughts cast into a state of greater confusion than ever, watching the liquid fire as it glanced over the water, and talking to himself whenever the thunder would let him hear his own voice.

It seemed, however, as if the same ghastly objects were destined to pursue him through that night; for scarcely had the storm in some degree abated, and while a faint grey streak was just beginning to shine through the clouds, marking where the dim moon lay veiled behind them, when he heard coming steps; and, as his only resource, he clambered into one of the beech trees and sat watching what took place below.

The only objects that he could distinguish were the forms of three men carrying a burthen between them. They laid it down under the trees, and for the space of about half an hour there was the busy sound of the pickaxe and the spade, the shovelfuls of earth cast forth, and the slow delving noise when the heavy foot pressed the edge into the ground. At the end of that time the burden was lifted up, deposited in the pit, and the earth piled in again. It was done with haste, for the grey dawn was beginning to appear; and John Graves could clearly distinguish the forms of Doveton, Hardcastle, and Harvey, as, each taking up a part of the tools they had employed, they hurried away to escape the clear eye of day.

When they were gone, the half-witted man came down from the tree, and stood gazing upon the spot where the fresh grey earth of the moor, mingling with the thin green grass under the beech trees, showed the place where they had concealed the body.

"And liest thou there, Harold?" he said, speaking aloud, though there was nobody to

hear, as was very much his custom. "And liest thou there, poor boy? with nothing around thee but the cold damp earth, and the grey morning of a storm shining upon thy last bed. And did they nurse thee so tenderly for this? did thy father spend wealth, and care, and thought, did he wrong others, and endanger his chance of heaven, and squander hope and fear, and passion and cunning, all for this? that thou shouldest lie here, without his knowing where thou restest — that thou shouldest lie here, like the daisy which his proud horse's feet cut off as he gallops along, without his knowing that it is broken? Alack and a-well-a-day! Alack and a-well-a-day! Poor boy, though thou haddest something of thy father's fire, and something of thy mother's weakness, thou wert good and generous, and tender and compassionate. I know not how it is, Harold, but I am more sorry for thee than for people that I have loved better, and I cannot bear to think that thou shouldest lie here, on this gloomy moor. Nor shalt thou, if I should dig thee out with my own hands! —— But then they 'll say I killed thee," he added, after a

moment's thought, "as they have said already of one who would as soon have killed himself. So I'll go and tell thy father, my poor boy — but no, I forgot, I must first go back to that man, for I promised; and I always keep my promise.—It could not be Gray that killed thee. No, no, I do not think that. He's not fond of blood. He spared my life, so why should he take thine? I do not half like to go to him, yet I must because I promised."

Poor Silly John lingered for some time beside the grave after he had finished this soliloquy, and then turned his steps back again with some degree of confidence gained from the open daylight, towards the abode of Franklin Gray. He still hesitated, however, and apprehensions of some kind made him wander at a distance from the house, for several hours before he could make up his mind to approach it. He even went to a small alehouse, and strengthened his resolution with beer, and bread and cheese; but that which, perhaps, afforded him more courage than any thing, was the act of paying for his

morning's meal with part of the money which Franklin Gray himself had given him.

As we have before seen, the conclusions at which the poor man arrived were very often just, and his madness consisted rather in a kind of wandering, an occasional want of the power of seizing and holding any thing firmly, than in folly. In the present instance, then, he inferred from the sight of the money given him by Franklin Gray, that a person who had treated him so kindly would not ill-use him or suffer him to be ill-used; and, accordingly, he gained courage from the contemplation, and set out for the tower. Although he had been twice there before, since Franklin Gray had been the tenant thereof, yet, on both those occasions, his visits had been after dark; but, as he approached at present the scenes of all the horrors of the preceding night, he could scarcely believe his eyes, so different was the whole when displayed in the broad sunshine from that which it appeared under the shadow. In this instance, however, the face that it wore in the open day was the deceptive one, as is but too common through the world,

and in life, and in the human heart. The tower, and the large building by its side, and the court within its walls, were converted into a farm-house, with its barns and its yard full of straw and ploughshares, and farming implements, while carts stood around bearing the name of "Franklin Gray, Farmer;" though the name of the place which followed was that of a distant part of the country, where probably he had exercised the same kind of farming which he now carried on. There were two or three stout men in farming habiliments about the yard too, whose faces were not unfamiliar to the eye of John Graves, and an honest watch-dog stood chained near the stable door, as if the good farmer was in fear of nightly depredators. A flaxen-headed ploughboy whistled gaily in the court; and at the moment that Silly John approached, a very lovely creature, habited in plain white garments, and carrying a beautiful child of little more than a year old in her arms, was crossing on tiptoe the dirty yard, wet and muddy with the storm of the preceding night.

"A dainty farmer's dame, indeed!" said the

half-witted man to himself; "but I'll speak to her rather than to any of the foxes. Women are always kindest."

His singular appearance had already attracted the attention of the person who was the subject of his contemplation, and she seemed at once to comprehend his character, and the nature of the affliction under which he laboured.

"He is one of the happy," she said, speaking low, and to herself; "What would you, poor man?" she added with her sweet-toned voice and foreign accent; "Do you seek money or food?"

The half-witted man did not reply directly to her question, but, caught by her appearance and by her accent, his mind seemed to wander far away to other things, and he answered, "Ay, pretty lady, there have been others such as you. Many a one quits her own land and marries a stranger, and is soon taught to repent, as women always will repent, when they have trusted those they knew not, and forgotten their own friends, and cast their country behind them."

She whom he addressed answered first by a

smile, and then said, "Not always! My husband will never make me repent, he never has made me repent, though long ago I did all you said, trusted a stranger, forgot my own friends, and cast my country behind me. But what would you, poor man? Can I help you?"

"Only tell Franklin Gray," replied the other, "that Henry Langford has been taken up on the charge of killing Lord Harold, and that they keep him a prisoner in Danemore Castle; so that now's the time to help him. I want nothing more, lady, but God's blessing upon your beautiful face;" and so saying, he hurried away and left her, while a slight degree of colour came up into the cheek of Mona Gray, as much at the earnestness of the look which he gave her, as at the allusion to her beauty.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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IN THREE VOLUMES.

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